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Heralds of Revolt

All in a moment, through the gloom were seen
Ten thousand banners rise into the air
With orient colours waving.

MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, l. 544.

Traverser le tumulte, le rêve, la lutte, le plaisir, le travail, la douleur,
le silence ; se reposer dans le sacrifice, et là, contempler Dieu.

VICTOR HUGO, *Les Contemplations*.

Heralds of Revolt

Studies in Modern Literature and Dogma

BY

WILLIAM BARRY, D.D.

CANON OF ST. CHAD'S, BIRMINGHAM, AND RECTOR OF ST. PETER'S,
LEAMINGTON

NEW EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

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ERNEST RENAN

THE TRADITION OF SCRIPTURE

PREFACE

OF the Essays contained in this volume the first four have been taken from the *Dublin Review*, the remaining seven were published in the *Quarterly Review*. I desire to make fitting acknowledgment to the editors and proprietors of both magazines, by whose courtesy these pages are a second time at my disposal.

Though none of them appeared during the days, now far off, when Dr. William George Ward was in command of the *Dublin*, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of associating that brilliant and large-hearted memory with my selections from the *Review* in which I was first permitted to try my 'prentice hand. To Dr. Ward I owe a lifelong debt, which I have never forgotten.

With equal gratitude I would recite another name, more widely famous, and very pleasant to me,—the name of Sir William Smith, D.C.L., who, from the beginning of our acquaintance in the *Quarterly* (which dates back to my considerations on Heinrich Heine reproduced here) down to the last moment in which he held the pen, allowed me every privilege, and gave me continual encouragement.

I mention these admirable friends and editors because they have passed away. My thanks are also due to others

whom I refrain from mentioning, and who will understand.

As regards the chapters themselves, I have altered nothing save an expression here and there which did not quite satisfy me, changing some dates and omitting a few phrases. Rightly or wrongly, the judgments which I was led to form in the first instance are mine to-day. I have given reasons for them ; and I trust that they will not be set down to mere prejudice or party-spirit, to the colour of my coat or the shape of my neckcloth. Whatever my opinions, they are not borrowed. How could I agree in principle with any one of the illustrious thinkers and artists whom I make bold to criticize ? Their general view, in all its multiplied lights and shades, may be resolved, it seems to me, into the doctrine of "the All and One," now termed Monism, which is growing common everywhere and increasingly self-conscious. I do not hold it ; I look upon it as false philosophy, ruinous to the ethics, the arts, the social order which we have inherited from our Christian ancestors. But in dealing with these men and women whom I define to be "Heralds of Revolt," I have done what was in my power to let them speak for themselves.

Literature may be depicted as a series of public movements, or may be summed up in significant types. There are advantages in either method. On the whole, I prefer with Sainte Beuve the way of portraiture, as at once more lively and, in effect, more profound. That which fascinates and persuades in a poem or a romance, in

history, biography, or criticism, never will be the same as that which convinces us in a treatise professing to be scientific. The poet is not a logician; the story-teller has his own peculiar and personal charm. Life is something individual. Agreement in a prevailing philosophy will not reduce men of genius to a function or a formula; each is himself and obstinately declines to be the other. Hence we pause in front of these pictures, taking them one by one, each for its own sake, subdued by the miracle of a mind which has found unique expression in colour, tone, harmony, never again to be repeated. We say with Ariosto, "Nature made it and then broke the mould." That is why George Eliot cannot be simply analysed into Balzac and George Sand; why Carlyle is no imitation of Goethe; why Amiel, Flaubert, Leconte de Lisle, Pierre Loti, demand their several handling; why Nietzsche, though coming straight down from Schopenhauer and Wagner, stands apart in a mad world of his own. Great men do not live exclusively on the Spirit of the Age; nor, perhaps, does any man.

One celebrated figure should be added to this gallery,—the dilettante of our modern Renaissance, Ernest Renan. But he, like the Hermes of Praxiteles at Olympia, claims a shrine to himself, which I hope, ere long, may do him justice. His name occurs frequently in the following pages, and the light in which I regard him cannot be doubtful.

As the conclusion of the whole matter, I have ventured to quote from a former writing of my own, "The

Two Standards," and from a page transcribed therein out of St. Ignatius Loyola. Thus the new philosophy and the old religion are brought face to face; revolt to the ideals of anarchy is contrasted with obedience to the Master of the Beatitudes; and we pass from considerations which bear chiefly on literature to the great first question, "What is the meaning of Life?" It is the question which, throughout this volume, I have striven to keep constantly before me, and to employ as a criterion at all times, even where I may seem to be discussing only minute particulars of style and situations in romance.

WILLIAM BARRY.

DORCHESTER, OXFORD,
June 24, 1904.

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SINCE writing the above lines I have published in "Literary Lives" the volume on Ernest Renan which they promised. I now include, by way of general introduction to these Essays, a chapter on "The School for Critics," dealing with Professor Saintsbury's "History of Criticism." This paper first appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, from which it is taken by the kind permission of editor and publisher.

And M. Zola is dead, owing to a tragic misadventure; Pierre Loti has drawn fresh pictures from his note-books of Jerusalem, Galilee, Egypt, and the singular "feminist" movement that is making itself felt in the hareems of the East; whilst M. Bourget in works like "Le Fantôme" and "L'Etape" preaches against the aberrations of passion, the reign of divorce, and the *déclassement* of individuals brought on by universal education. I do not find, however, that it is necessary to enlarge my borders or to glance at pages where nothing really new has been suggested; though M. Bourget's repudiation of his earlier views cannot fail to be significant. Here I look upon him as among the "Heralds of Revolt"; some day, perhaps, I may call attention to the patriotic, decentralizing, and even religious tendencies in the latest

viii ADVERTISEMENT TO NEW EDITION

French literature, to which “Le Disciple” served as a prelude. Across the Channel that combination of Realism and Decadence which is illustrated in my seventh chapter still prevails, and its consequences are justifying day by day the verdict I passed upon it. I leave my comments, therefore, exactly as they stood.

LEAMINGTON,

Feb. 22, 1909.

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THE SCHOOL FOR CRITICS¹

FIRST, as the Greeks would say, acknowledgments are due to that Power which has bestowed on Professor Saintsbury the vigour, perseverance, insight, and opportunities whereby he can now look upon his *opus magnum*, the story of criticism, as a thing accomplished. It is done, and well done. Hardly another man living could have dared so large an enterprise; and who would not have fainted in the long journey, which in depths and heights may be thought Dantean, from the Greek dawn of literature to the twilight or sunset of the nineteenth Christian century? Three volumes, two thousand pages, authors beyond reckoning; "the best" and "the rest" whom our critic summons before his judgment-seat; add the problems of style, matter, purpose, that break in at side-entrances; the dates and personal issues; the audience itself, creative genius here, ideal spectator there, and the general reader, who cannot be turned out once he has made his way in. It is the "Review of Reviews" sublimated to a quintessence, the Great Exhibition of critical products, set out by one hand, but filling court after court with samples and trophies from the chief Western languages, every one duly ticketed and priced. Certainly our English architect rivals "the almost frightful laboriousness of Bouterwek and Eichhorn," much as these excited the astonishment of Carlyle. His reading,

¹ 1. *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe*. Vol. III. By George Saintsbury, LL.D., 1905. 2. *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*. By S. H. Butcher, LL.D. Third edition, 1902. 3. *Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects*. By the same, 1904. 4. *Dramatic Criticism*. By A. B. Walkley, 1903. 5. *Sainte-Beuve*. Par Léon Séché. Tomes I., II., 1905. 6. *Correspondance de Sainte-Beuve avec M. et Mme. Juste Olivier*. Par Mme. Bertrand. Notes, etc., de Léon Séché, 1905.

inexhaustible, minute, always at command, would have charmed the melancholy Burton, stirred up Warburton of the "Divine Legation" to envy and argue with him, challenged Buckle to a second exploration in the wastes of print; and it may deter the less resolute from taking, as he declares every critic is bound to take, all literature for his province.

"To read, and read, and evermore to read," in books often obsolete, has been the occupation of a lifetime with Professor Saintsbury. His aim is the delight which he considers to be the true purpose of literature—delight given by the work of genius, felt by the reader who comes to it in receptive mood. For literature is the art of expression in words, criticism the impression it makes on that "sensitised plate" which our minds should be when in contact with it. When we know how to record the lines and strokes of the mental photograph, not blurring them by prejudice, or overcharging lights and shadows with our private darkness, we are fit to be named critics, not otherwise. The whole art of judgment is faithful impression. Nor is any way but this conceivable, whereby to "discover and celebrate the beautiful things of literature." It is not a science *a priori*, with rules, kinds, qualities, measures, and limits laid down beforehand in some "Ars Poetica," whether we term the lawgiver Aristotle, or Vida, or Boileau. The critic does not legislate, he observes; and his observation is a feeling, the test of it enjoyment. For he is concerned, not as the philosopher with what is true, nor as the moralist with what is right or wrong in conduct, but simply with what is beautiful in the written word. Literature is, then, something which we can define as an end to itself, distinct from ethics as from metaphysics, subject to its own laws and conditions, a mode of human activity claiming its proper value. The appraiser of that value is the critic.

Unless we mistake, such is the Professor's "articulus stantis aut cadentis Ecclesiæ" in the hotly debated question that has filled so many volumes from Plato's "Phædrus," "Symposium," and "Republic," and from the "Poetics" of Aristotle onwards to our own day. Let it

be remarked, however, that for the historian of critics it is a "previous question." Professor Saintsbury, though a student of philosophies—which no Petrus Comestor of books old and new could well escape being—is on his guard against the German fault (as he considers it) of striking too high into the clouds of speculation, not less than against the opposite one, now growing much more common, of resolving poet and poetry into parish registers and laundresses' washing-bills. He quotes from Joubert, "*Quelquefois un besoin de philosopher gâte tout*"; and he is inclined to flee "*ultra Sauromatas*" or to the Icy Ocean rather than take service under Baumgarten, nay, even the greater Hegel. Yet he would doubtless agree when Professor Butcher tells his American audience that "from the outset Greek thinkers looked slightly on that multifarious learning which holds together a mass of unrelated facts, but never reaches to the central truth of things." Had no dramatic unity, arising by means of a strangely varying conflict, governed the wide and scattered movements of criticism, where would be the binding interest of these three great volumes?

But Professor Saintsbury's dislike, not to put too fine a point on it, of system in every shape, brings with it a little inconvenience. For want of clearly stated principles, there is repetition which takes up room and often reduces to the proportions of a vignette the pictures of consummate artists on which we should delight to dwell. On the opposite side, condensation is sacrificed to a humorous enforcement of the writer's view, in places and ways that, if unexpected, are not always inevitable. To complain of lively touches, quaint allusions, or even friskings and gambollings, in a work derived, as to manner, from Montaigne and reminiscent of Rabelais, is not at all the drift of these observations. When the Titan scales heaven, he may do anything he will with Ossa and Pelion, provided he can get thither. But while we praise the alertness, gaiety, and defiant good-nature of this never-wearied Adeimantus, we feel that perhaps "a wider metacritic would not hurt our critic"—if Aurora Leigh will forgive the parody. A philosophic programme

would have saved space and time, brought out the unity which underlies a discursive treatment, and let us into the secret of criticism.

However, once we have seized the clue, it becomes a pleasant game to trace through all his windings the Romantic—for such our guide declares himself to be—who leads us in and out and round about on a quest resembling that of the “Faery Queen,” and not less intricate or less adventurous. The giants of a false criticism must be met and overthrown: the paladins of a true theory—yes, theory it cannot fail of being, do what the author may to dissemble it—need praise and encouragement. For there is a dramatic contest, as in the creations of genius, so in the judgments on what it has achieved. If poets came first, in that *Juventus Mundi* to which we look for their Golden Age—an age not occurring everywhere at the same time, but consequent on those peculiar and mysterious causes whence inspired imagination takes its origin—philosophers came second, and in their train the problems of a critical inquiry into all that poets mean or ought to mean by their singing.

This is that “long quarrel,” known to us well from Plato’s “Dialogues,” between the votary of Beauty and the disciple of Truth. It is even more. The philosopher could not but grow into a preacher; among Greeks he was by profession a moral dignitary; and he asked whether old romance, with its legends of the gods exhibited on a public stage, did not corrupt the world which it was only too willing to please. Truth, scientific or matter of fact, murmured at the poet’s “lying fables.” Morality declaimed against his light and frivolous, or terrible and disedifying, mythological scenes, which outraged a more humane conception of life than the primitive one whence they had sprung. The dispute, beginning with Ionians like Anaxagoras, who attacked the popular religion, rises in Plato to the height of that great argument between Puritan and Dilettante, between Church and Stage, nay, between culture and life itself, of which the forms are innumerable, the debates unceasing, the issue never long decided in favour of one or other combatant. For we are dealing with incommensurables, from which,

whatever common measure we apply to them, there is always left over an unexplored remainder.

The first brilliant piece of criticism that we fall in with among Athenians illustrates the tangle and points the paradox recurring ever and anon in Professor Saintsbury's volumes. The critic is Aristophanes; the victim of his cruel yet earnest sport is Euripides. One would fancy that the comic poet should allow or practise what has been known to later times as "Art for Art's sake," But not so; he censures "our Euripides the human" as a bad citizen, a sophist, a sentimentalist, a realist, who teaches how to make the worse appear the better cause, and whose unbelief is a crime against the State. Æschylus, on the other hand, represents for this out-and-out Conservative the poet of heroic days, who instructs youth in all high wisdom:

*τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν
ἔστι διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖς ἡβῶσιν δὲ ποιηταί.*

And this view lingered down to Roman times, to Plutarch and Strabo; or shall we not rather say that it never died, and is not likely soon to die? For what is the intent of reading in elementary schools Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and other inspired singers, but to cultivate and enhance the moral sensibilities of childhood? Poetry has ever been the "prima philosophia" of those who would turn away in disgust and despair from abstract systems. Nor did Plato condemn the use of poets as "fathers and guides to wisdom" for the young, which he permits in that choice little drama of boys at play, the "Lysis." But, when he sketched the better life that was to be, and would have built up the perfect State, his judgment became inexorably severe. The crowned and delightful poet must go into banishment. Plato's reasons, in part, are those of Aristophanes; all culture which does not make for education, moral and political, is naught. The Athenian has now become a Spartan; we behold in far-off perspective Calvin at Geneva; or we hear the milder Racine protesting, as by the lips of Jansenius, that, if he writes the tale of love in "Phèdre," his aim has been a warning not to indulge wickedness even in dreams. "Ce

que je puis assurer c'est que je n'en ai point fait," he says of his tragedies, "où la vertu soit plus mise en jour que dans celle-ci." Virtue alone will justify beautiful writing, these lofty prophets teach us. But the "unexplored remainder" is not thereby reasoned out of court.

Aristotle felt it, with his happy gift of looking round every problem and letting it make its own impression, whether he could solve it or not. His "Poetics," though no more than a fragment, opens the first chapter in scientific criticism, and was long esteemed its inspired or at least infallible Testament. It is still among the living things of literature, serene with a Greek tranquillity which gives the effect of light on marble; and if we read it for suggestions towards a doctrine of the ancient epic and drama, nothing will do us more good. Happily, too, it has been translated and commented upon by a master whose knowledge is as rare as his manner of presenting it, "*lenis minimeque pertinax*," is persuasive. We could not wish for an introduction more illuminating to Mr. Saintsbury's record of critical achievement—excellent as he, too, is on Hellenic subjects—than Dr. Butcher's edition of this thought-provoking treatise, and his "Harvard Lectures," which, with his earlier essays on the "Greek Genius," complete what he has to tell us concerning Greek literary criticism.

Than the "Poetics" no work of antiquity has been more misconstrued, partly owing to ignorance, but quite as much because the author was himself uncertain of his position, tentative and elusive, not enough of a poet to allow for the "demonic," or, in later language, the "unconscious," that lies beneath intellect, creative or critical; and, though he had been Homer's peer in that respect, too entirely Greek to feel with a different world of poetry, suppose the Oriental then, or the Romantic since. He was not prescribing how genius ought to write; he drew from dead and famous authors examples to demonstrate how they had written; and his rules are judgments which *they* seem to give, not which he imposes on them. He is not consistent, and is far from infallible. Yet he takes us a step beyond Plato; for he sees, at last, that poetry, which *κατ' ἐξοχήν* is literature, cannot, as being a

fine art, merely subserve didactic ends, but is an end in itself; its object is "to produce an emotional delight, a pure and elevated pleasure." This truth, never hidden from the great masters, found classic statement when it was most needed in Dryden: "Delight is the chief, if not the only end of poesy; instruction can be admitted, but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights."

May, then, truth and virtue be disregarded, clean contrary to that Platonic sermon which ends to such wonderful effect the dialogue with Phædrus? It might seem so while we are quoting the Stagirite's judgments on poetry, appealing as they do to logic and to strictly æsthetic *momenta*. Yet, says Dr. Butcher, Aristotle would not "set aside as a matter of indifference the moral content of a poem or the moral character of the author." Nay, "they are all-important factors in producing the total impression"; and, since tragedy is the imitation of life, "the pleasure he [Aristotle] contemplates could not conceivably be derived from a poem which offers low ideals of life and conduct, and misinterprets human destiny." An American scholiast—we rejoice to know that Greek studies flourish in Maryland—Mr. Carroll, has perhaps brought out the principle better than Aristotle did himself: "Morality enters into consideration," for the artist, he says, 'only as implied in the æsthetic ideal.'

But the older prepossession survives along with this more accurate judgment; and rules too rigorous on their ethical side left the "Poetics" a fertile debating-ground for after-times. What shall the drama make of its hero from this point of view? Can he be a villain, or the Prince of Darkness, and not rather morally noble, though there may be flaws in his nature? Is the contemplated "excellence" possible in a character like, we will say, Napoleon, whose deeds were on so magnificent a scale, but whose principles were the reverse of "eminently good"? The answer seems to be that moral grandeur is demanded, but that *μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας* throws the quality into the action, implies a deeper universal element than we understand by such words as "ethical" and their kindred, and leads us on to the disclosure of laws which,

in the range and import of their bearing, do, by deliverance of our emotions from the commonplace, "lift us till we touch the spheres." Herein lies the morality of great or true literature.

Meanwhile, the point was to be unceasingly argued by critics, right and wrong, "between whose endless jar justice resides." So, too, when the delight given is defined as "rational enjoyment," are we not left in a quivering balance of adjective and substantive? Enjoyment we know, but what is reason? Socrates, in the "Apology," cannot discover it when he turns to the mighty bards. "They showed me in an instant," he says, "that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners and soothsayers, who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them." It was a teaching from of old, explicitly stated by Democritus of Abdera, but far more splendidly in the Theban "Pindarus"—to speak Miltonically—that the Muse utters the oracle and her "prophet" renders it in rhyme. "The idea of the frenzied poet," observes our Harvard lecturer, "strikes us as having a strangely un-Greek air." Is not that because we set in front of our thoughts a more recent, more Attic, stage of life and literature than the remote but exceedingly grand primeval era to which Dionysus came with his revellers in the echoing glades of Cithæron; when Apollo was first oracular at Delphi, and the vast mythologies arose that overshadowed Æschylus? Trained skill, deliberate intellect, mark out Sophocles, Thucydides, and other men of the centre. Yet there was a mystic mountain-scenery behind them to which we owe the "Bacchanals" and that choral rhythm, long untamable, without which drama had never come to the birth.

Plato could not be unaware of it; therefore his "Laws" maintain that "the poet, when he sits down on the tripod of the Muse, is not in his right mind." To Aristotle, who stays below in the cool element of prose congenial to science, reason means the conscious intellect; to his predecessor of the Academy, supreme in another kind of prose, who foresaw in the "Symposium" a possible Shakespeare, as in the "Phædrus" he almost reveals

Dante by anticipation of his fused consummate qualities, reason could not but signify "divine powers inherent." But there is nothing so distinctive of the "Poetics" as that, while it leans unquestionably to the side of formal understanding, it does not surrender the tradition dear to Greeks. We are taught in it that "poetry implies a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness. In the one case a man can take the mould of any character; in the other, he is lifted out of his proper self." Four expressive terms, amplified to this English rendering, open the arena on which the Classic and the Romantic have since engaged in their everlasting Theban struggle. The "happy gift," the inflexible genius, the delicate power of seeing resemblances, the quickness to enter dramatically into another's feelings, convey in their idea, says Dr. Butcher, "a more conscious critical faculty." But "the strain of madness," which Longinus termed "vehement and inspired passion," is something else, greater or less according to its achievement. We, who have learnt that this play of "The Critics" will be matter for centuries and nations to wrangle over, perceive how the first act has already begun. Like every good opening, it carries with it incidents, persons, style, atmosphere; it has a certain equipoise not to be troubled, though swaying never so violently hither and thither. Criticism, remarks Professor Saintsbury with uncommon depth, is the fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes in which the combatants change swords, not once but often, each alternately crying out that nature, reason, imagination, good sense and good taste are on his side; and philosophy does its best to make the rivals friends.

Allowing, as does Dr. Butcher, that "Greece presents a phenomenon unique" in the fine arts, that it knew how to create "fixed types, governed by a rigid code of rules, yet working in harmony with the spontaneous play of native faculty," we may, by pressure here and inference there, derive the problems which all succeeding critics have undertaken, from Plato and Aristotle. The Grecian style does not encourage a lawless indulgence of personality. Caprice, freakishness, humour—in Ben Jonson's handling of the term—it will

scarcely tolerate; and, if we meet no allusion to Aristophanes in the "Poetics," this may be partly the reason. Æschylus also stands aloof and foreign to it, as an elder god, Titanic rather than Olympian. Measure, not mania, is the word for Hellas.

Nevertheless, a third pre-eminent critic, whom we are still not forbidden to think of as Longinus, corrects the pedantry under which Romans were tempted to follow their own less excellent way, and thanks to which scholars of the Renaissance came near to defeating the very object of humane letters. That genial survey of the elevated in Greek and Latin authors, "On the Sublime," with its side-glance even at Hebrew, holds up from first to last enthusiasm or inspiration as the source to which poets owe their influence. Almost we hear the language of Goethe when it declares that "sublimity is the echo of a great soul." The end of literature, like its beginning, is "transport"—to be carried out of ourselves into a world beyond the common. It demands an innate power of forming great conceptions, it moves us in the rapture of "vehement and inspired passion"; these combine to express themselves in figured speech, by noble diction, by dignified and lofty composition. But the elevated mind holds the foremost rank. The fine anthology, ranging over seven hundred years, which Longinus has selected, bears witness to his catholic taste. He can appreciate Homer and Demosthenes, Herodotus and Thucydides, Sappho and Cicero. He has come down to our modern world as the last of the Greek critics who understood their own literature. But he is also the first of comparative students, acquainted with models in every different style, large-minded enough to pursue the quest of high thoughts clad in beautiful words wherever they might be found. He, more than either Aristotle or Plato, is the pattern on which a literary critic should frame his judgments, having first drunk at the fountain of so deep and stimulating an enthusiasm; for, as Pope sings in an almost fervent stanza, "he is himself that great sublime he draws."

We need not linger among the Romans except to mark that, whether in Cicero, Horace, or Quintilian, they were always moving from poetry towards rhetoric, as the

genius of Latin could not but incline them. For the topmost works of Hellas, its epic and its tragic miracles, they never entertained the feeling which Northerners, more susceptible to inward things, to the essence and spirit of the unconventional, have shown. Rome might always be defined as a grandiose convention; its ideal spectator was the Senate; its vulgar, the crowd which thronged to Circus and Colosseum. Virgil and Catullus betray another mood; but they are not Romans proper. Though Professor Saintsbury will not allow any definite application of "race" or *milieu* as explaining the colours of genius, it would be hardly fair to deny that there is such a thing as Latin rhetoric, which corresponds now, as in every preceding age, to the temperament best summed up in the word "meridional." Nay, the Greeks had it first; and Socrates inquired scornfully, "Is not rhetoric the art of enchanting by argument?" But, while the singer in every land calls forth admiration, the rhetorician among Germans and Englishmen is held, as he was by Plato, to be somewhat of a sophist and his art a pretence. These Barbarians have gone one step with Quintilian. "*Pectus est enim quod disertos facit, et vis mentis*"—be sincere, and eloquence will take care of itself. In their eyes rules of fine speaking are pedantry, the use of gestures is theatrical, the study of tones and attitudes affectation, and the whole thing unworthy of a serious man. We should greatly err if we fancied Southern peoples, or those who govern them, indifferent, as most of ourselves, to these outward forms. On the contrary, when they are in earnest, meridionals become at once theatrical; they cannot understand the British quality that intensifies action by its quietness. Rhetoric breeds formal rules; and the Southern who turns critic is not happy until he has registered them.

The magnificent instance here is Cicero, undoubtedly a man of genius. His discussions touching oratory and orators illustrate, in graceful language, the precepts which they enforce. Quintilian, who had good sense but nothing more, criticises, as a reviewer and a college tutor, in his Tenth Book, the chief writers of Greece and Rome. Seneca, from the moralising point of view, contributes to an art not dissimilar, the art of being wise,

sententious, persuasive, by maxim and aphorism. As we read, we feel that inspiration has bent its neck to training, poetry given way before prose; that literature may now be hand-made according to receipt; and we look round for Juvenal to satirise Nero, the decadent versifier of Trojan themes, or for Petronius and his butt Trimalchio in the immortal supper.

All this wears a modern air indeed. But the Romantic adventure which we know as the Middle Ages puts between our own period and that of Roman decadence an interlude during which no critic arose to vex the poets of the Barbarians. Rules were not; instinct pleased itself and wrought things not contemptible, the strong medieval epics, *chansons de gestes*, rhymed Latin hymns and prose—a world of marvels, undreamt by Aristotle, from the Vulgate and Church liturgies to the cycles of romance, legends of saints, chronicles, and fairy-tales, concerning all which it may be said that, if inspired, they were artless, if dull, chaotic; but the air in which they live and move is poetry. Their wild freedom takes us back again to man's golden prime, to mythologies, visions, oracles, wonders of every sort; we lose ourselves in an enchanted forest, and are willing to be led astray—all the more that we feel how this breath of a new dawn will kindle into flame on the lips of St. Francis of Assisi, and modulate, when the time arrives, into the mystic unfathomable song of Dante. What, then, are rules if an untutored Umbrian, without any rule, can strike the note of Italian popular literature? what, if the whole world cries "*Onorate l'altissimo poeta*" when the Florentine passes, wearing the crowns of all-creative genius; a prophet in his deep wisdom; a visionary whose dreams are adamantine realities; a moralist whose pity is infinite while he utters the sentence of doom; a craftsman whose words are jewels and his verses a shining light; finally, a soul whose "*vehement and inspired passion*" carries the pilgrim along through every stage of suffering and of glory until the universe lies open to his gaze in splendour everlasting? Can this wonder be accomplished without Aristotle's "*Poetics*"? If so, the question of rules *a priori* is decided against them once for all.

So did not the Renaissance believe when its hour struck on the great horologe of change. It canonised Cicero, stereotyped Virgil, declared poetry to be an imitation of nature, and made of it a *pastiche*. It was wholly a thing of tradition, precedent, scholarship, plagiarism, and letter-worship. Even Politian, one of its genuine poets, had so little discriminating sense as to fancy that the pseudo-Epistles of Phalaris might have been forged by Lucian. Except Ariosto, the singer of a *chanson de geste* in choice Italian, to whom add Rabelais, the French Aristophanes (certainly no ape of rule or custom), and Montaigne, free as air in his wide wanderings through literature, the Humanists are all seated at the second table. Not, surely, Erasmus, it will be said. No, not Erasmus, if we judge him by his affinities with Lucian, or by his contempt for fanatical Ciceronians, or by the living grace and personal touches that adorn his Latin style. Erasmus, however, was absorbed in scholarship, which is not here the question. But the crowd remains, ever growing in numbers and arrogance, who quoted Aristotle the critic, but did not see the varied strands in his teaching, and who upheld him as a literary dictator amid the ruins of old religion and the revolt against medieval philosophy. These are the Neo-Classics, mighty men of renown, to whose influence, as one cause out of several, we may ascribe it that Italian ceased to do its first works, turned away from Dante, and gave us for the "Orlando," not so much the "Gierusalemme," as an aureate and laureate jargon, empty but pretentious, fatal to sense in its cultivation of sound. The Neo-Classics made of Italian that dead language which in books represents the dead churches drawn in perspective by Palladio. Lines and measures are everything; but the spirit of life is not in them. Of course, freedom was wanting too; and the last pages of Longinus, with their noble sadness, might have been written for the age of Spanish despotism that discrowned the genius of Italy.

This false Aristotle it is whom Professor Saintsbury, in his second volume, delineates under all masks and counterfeittings, with infinite citations, a vivacity that seldom flags, a justice of appraisal the more striking that he is, or means to be, utterly opposed to the mere

Humanist. Literature, he grants, will yield formulas of a kind, and we may apply the Lesbian rule; but will formulas yield criticism? If the same explanation does not hold for any two instances of the sublime, how can they? From that Torres Vedras the professor will not budge. "Poetical predestination" is heresy worse than Calvin's. Not only must dogmas of that limiting power be cast aside, but in the Republic of Letters no absolute sovereign keeps his court.

"Not Homer, not Dante, not Shakespeare himself" (cries the anarchist) "can be allowed the first position" as a "positive pattern of all poetic excellence"; and "the main principle and axiom of all sound criticism is that not merely no actual poet, but no possible one, can be allowed the second," namely, as an "*index expurgatorius* of all poetic delinquency" (ii. 35).

Thus our historian, who becomes for the moment a philosopher *malgré lui*, nails his colours to the mast. How should we not cheer and follow him? Let us write on the pennon with Petronius, "*Præcipitandus est liber spiritus*": Freedom shall have its fling. Our fighting tactics we borrow from Nelson, "Grapple and board"; or, to vary the phrase with Balzac's Marius, the barber of Paris, "*L'exécution, voilà la chose.*"

There is, then, no art of creation teachable by the card. A composer may understand all the mysteries of verse-making, and have all knowledge of Virgil; but, if he fail in that which is beyond, he is nothing, his poem has never drawn breath of life. Now contrast the "Poetics" of Vida, which, in Professor Saintsbury's judgment, has wielded an influence greater than Horace or Aristotle. We are not reviewing the Professor's second volume, tempting as it would be to pass our time delectably among his masterpieces—for they deserve that recognition—of fully informed, well-balanced verdicts on the humanist criticism. But if we have not surveyed the battlefield from Vida to Boileau and Pope, we shall be at a loss to know what the Romantic school was contending for when it opposed these legions, and how great a victory it won. Vida comes some years before the earliest prose critics of the new Italian, anti-Platonic, Virgil-worshipping

Academy; he anticipates the main group of them by more than twenty; and, "by a sort of intuition," he defines the orthodox literary creed which was to prevail from the midday of the Renaissance until Christopher Pitt translated him for the eighteenth century.

Vida's life (1480-1546) covers a critical period in the revolution which, breaking once for all with medieval metaphysics, romance, architecture, painting, and general polity, went on its way towards the "siècle de Louis Quatorze," in which it found perfect expression, and, as a living movement, came to an end. What it could do was done then as never since or before. All Nature, it cried, that was worth imitating had been already imitated by the ancients; imitate them and you will be a great poet. This was the sum; but Homer and the Greeks had been alembicated into "the Mantuan"; therefore steal from him phrase, rhythm, character, episode: your heroic poem is then complete. "Reason" had said its last word, for Nature could achieve no more than the "Æneid" and the "Georgics," with pastoral "Bucolics" thrown in for a *buona mano*.

We smile at this extravagance: we pity Virgil, whose tender grace needs it not at all. Yet our modern poetry might have been sacrificed to Vida's rules. "To almost any man of the Renaissance," observes Professor Saintsbury, "it would have seemed half sacrilege and half madness to examine ancient and modern literatures on the same plane, and decide what was germane to each and what common to all." In the Professor's view, as in ours, Dante is "the greatest man of letters for fifteen hundred years"; but even Italians would not have set the "Divina Commedia" above the "Æneid," though most of us do so now. Wherever the Neo-Classics triumphed, Dante underwent eclipse. These were consequences which need not have followed from studying the classics. Why they did follow is not an inquiry for this place and time.

Aristotle's fragment laid stress on subject rather than character, looked not so much to "beautiful moments" as to a well-ordered whole, and might easily be thought to insist on direct ethical teaching as the outcome of drama. It did not reach the discussion of lyric or pastoral poetry.

When dealing with epic, it was still the fable and the good hero that it kept in view. Such treatment, while it furnished Italian commentators with text and moral, led the French into their tedious interminable disputes on those "unities" at the mention of which we turn the page. But the difference was in favour of Italians. They could not give up Ariosto, let the critical hounds bay never so loudly. They had an inheritance and a tradition of "heroical passion," with its tongues of fire and wings of inspired fancy; how was pedestrian logic to catch their soaring hippogriff? Accordingly, from Trissino's "Poetica," which began to appear in 1529, two years after Vida, down to the execution, in another than the literary sense, of Giordano Bruno in 1600, the battle of wits went on. Theorists and formalists were arrayed over against a dwindling but valiant company, of whom Patrizzi is the standard-bearer. To this period belongs the martyrdom of Tasso, who wanted the big heart which would have ridden through formulas, defied the Inquisition of preceptists, and given us something greater than his "Gierusalemme" in either of its editions. Both manner and matter had by this time shed the last of their Christian Middle Age. To be literary was to be pagan. So far had the Renaissance brought it in Catholic Italy. But its day was over when Lilius Giraldus and Summo had exhibited the art of judging as a department of letters subject to its own laws.

England and Spain, whatever individual critics might import of the plague, were still on the old heroic adventure. Their conquests for all time, as the Golden Book records in a catalogue headed by Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cervantes, proved that the nineteen centuries which lay between these bold spirits and Aristotle had not been a mere parenthesis. Deeps were explored never sailed upon by the Argonauts; heights were attempted beyond Olympus and all its gods; the new world of romance found its Columbus, to whom rules and unities were a Sargasso Sea of floating weeds. Better than critics are creators. These two literatures, our never-sealed fountain of delight, made it sheerly impossible that justification by theory alone should prevail outside the Latin borders.

Modern poetry, original and creative prose, were safe. The classics of a universe which was to develop on Gothic paths of freedom were written and could not be committed to the flames. Neither Ascham nor Sidney nor Bacon, neither Quevedo nor Gracian, had it in their power to forbid the doings of supreme excellence, at once idiomatic and national, which extend from Marlowe to Milton, from "Don Quixote" to the dramas of Lope, Tirso de Molina, and Calderon. Here the true answer is anticipated to that French system which, crystallising in Malherbe, and set to music not unworthy in Boileau, has made the round of a more and more unbelieving world. Dead we cannot term it so long as eloquent and erudite counsel like M. Brunetière plead in its defence. "Enfin Malherbe vint," sings the charmed Despréaux; and the battle of the books was taken up in French, English, German, henceforth to be the languages of modern inspiration.

It was a dispute more complex than it seemed. If Regnier, who stands for liberty in his great "Ninth Satire," appeared to make most of the "subject" or fable, and if Malherbe and Boileau insisted on "form and expression," the real heart of the controversy was not there. Milton, who shows us the poet "soaring in the high reason of his fancy, with his garlands and singing-ropes about him," fixes by this one image the quality of literature as a noble art; for every kind of prose deserving to be admired shares in that elevation. But high reason is something more than taste or even good sense. There is a sublime in French too, which does not wait for Victor Hugo. It meditates in Pascal, preaches in Bossuet, laughs with a curiously mingled tone of doubt and sadness in Molière. On these Boileau, as the chronology proves, could act either not at all or not much. His one undoubted pupil, yet not altogether his, may be thought to be Racine. Of Corneille, it is well said that he was a Samson, not eyeless, but yet grinding "in Gaza, at the mill with slaves," and "under bonds to the Philistian yoke"; yet he likewise owed nothing to Boileau. What, therefore, does the dreary talk amount to which fills "L'Art Poétique" and its successors down to La Harpe? It ushered in the least

romantic of centuries ; it produced a shoal of mediocrities, who blasphemed what they did not understand—the Rapins, Rymers, Le Bossus, with their art of sinking in poetry ; it explains or exemplifies that disenchanting touch in Voltaire which for ever divides him, not only from the poets, but from all high literature. Yet, as Professor Saintsbury finds little difficulty in bringing home to us, Boileau was no great critic. Where he translates Horace he does best ; but he censures Corneille without grounds, praises Molière faintly, and by excommunicating the older French masters, broke with the past, as did the men of 1789, to the irretrievable loss of his country.

There were protests, and not silent either, from La Bruyère, Fénelon, and, much later, from Fontenelle. But the revolt which ended in victory began, so far as we can ever trace beginnings, with our English Dryden. Professor Saintsbury, had he done nothing else, would have deserved our heartiest applause by his reinstatement, before a public that is always forgetting, of the native critics, from “Glorious John” to Samuel Johnson and to Hazlitt, whose merits, though not exactly philosophical, are those which he “most affects.” For he puts aside metaphysics, and hopes that he has too much wit to indulge in definitions. Be that as it may, literary judgment is one thing, ethical, or that of causes, another. Englishmen, it must be granted, refuse to take epigram seriously, are bewildered by formulas, suspect the abstract, and read Shakespeare because they like him. Dryden, who shares with Dante—perhaps, says Professor Saintsbury (yet he holds himself in reserve on that matter), with Goethe—the distinction of being at once the greatest poet and critic of his age, was no metaphysician. He resumes the position of Longinus, gives to Shakespeare “the larger soul of poesy,” brushes Aristotle out of his way—“if he had seen our plays he might have changed his mind”—and by that spell turns the men of the Renaissance to Circe’s litter. Dryden was not aware that he foretold a coming revolution. Many years went by, and it tarried ; while the Augustan age of Anne demonstrated, as M. Brunetière argues so curiously, that the classics of

a nation need not include its supreme writers. For the Elizabethans are supreme, but not classic. The nineteenth century could not have been classic had it tried. There is a moment when language, authors, and people, says, M. Brunetière, reach a certain balance of proportion ; until it arrives, inspiration outruns shape and measure ; so soon as it passes it is not to be recovered. Imitation or extravagance—behold the Caudine Forks between which modern literature must go under the yoke.

It is a "bland assumption," returns our professor (though he has not been arguing with M. Brunetière) ; and history teaches a more hopeful view. Dryden's attitude—which was that of England—towards Shakespeare ; even Addison's timid eulogy of Milton ; Johnson's "Preface," his declaration in the *Rambler* that "it ought to be the first endeavour of a writer to distinguish nature from custom," and his protest against "rules which no literary dictator had authority to enact"—prepare us for a double movement, whose onset the Neo-Classics could not withstand. It came in this country by way of a return to the Middle Ages. Gray, the two Wartons, Hurd, Percy's "Reliques," announce that glimpses are caught of the true principles, the only method, on which sound literary judgments can be framed. But in Germany the pioneer is Lessing, who, though he declared Aristotle flawless, conducts us to a different prospect, over which rise the Alps of a new philosophy. Date these commencements where we will, a sense of kinship warns us that we are at length at home, in the modern period, when we meet any of them.

Here it may be asked whether, in arranging his final volume, Professor Saintsbury should not have let the Germans precede, the English, especially Coleridge and his "Companions," follow. The order is by no means immaterial to a right apprehension of what constituted criticism in the nineteenth century. Coleridge is a prince in the critical Israel, according to our book ; and every well-read German will say "*Meinetwegen*, let him be so." How, then, did he reach that pre-eminence ? We must, it would appear, answer thus. Literature being the fusion of ideas and images by virtue of constructive reason, set forth in delightful words, Coleridge had the mind, imagi-

nation, ear, and style by which he entered into the whole and its parts, as a critic who was likewise a poet. This original, or rather unique, combination of gifts will neither be understood nor accounted for, if we do not trace it to the revolution which dethroned Locke and gave Germany the sceptre of European thought for a hundred years.

No one familiar with Herder's speculations, with Kant's influence on Schiller, with Fichte's "Æsthetic Education of Man," with Goethe's poetic anticipations of Hegel's "higher synthesis" and "freedom of the spirit," but will acknowledge that we owe to the movement of which these are aspects a deeper feeling for Shakespeare and all other literature, ancient or modern. In this new learning Coleridge led the way for Englishmen; but he received as well as gave, and his lamp was kindled at these torches. It is no question of borrowing, though it well might be, if that signified. Nor, again, is any regular "system of æsthetics" in dispute. The "Idea," divine or diabolic, which overshadows German thought, is not to be condensed like oxygen into a liquid form and labelled in Florence flasks. Can we listen to Coleridge or Carlyle without feeling that a new ichor is running in their veins, that an accent of inspiration, not heard since Milton fell silent, is making their speech bold? What has come to pass? A vision of things from some entirely fresh outlook has put to flight the unsubstantial dreams, calling themselves Reason and Common-sense, which in Voltaire found their oracle. At such points as these, literary judgments, if they take on no colour from philosophy, are apt to seem unfinished.

Our Professor, who has a dread of first principles, hints a different reason. He doubts if the Schillers and Goethes have not been overpraised in this department. Schiller, indeed, he calls roundly a pedant; the belief in Goethe's unrivalled powers of criticism he sets down as a "superstition." These Rhadamanthine decrees will astonish not a few; and we may leave to the patriots of the Fatherland whatever epithets they shall choose to retort on one whom an Italian reader qualifies as "digiuno di filosofia." But we can partly explain them. Our author judges literature by its "beautiful moments" rather than by "heads of method" or *aperçus* into the nature of things.

He perceives in the German a neglect of style which argues defective sense; and this exasperates him, as it has many another, precisely no less than the lack of insight which we feel in Boileau and his camp-followers, notwithstanding their elegance of form. There is food for amazement in literary critics who discuss the sublime and beautiful on a dissecting-board, and who serve as instruments of culture, but have little of it themselves. The Philistine *Gelchrter* was a scandal to Goethe; but he lasted on, and may still be found in high places. Yet culture itself, as the Weimar poet handled that fine art, is suspect to Professor Saintsbury. It seeks its own, with an individual self-regard, among the treasures of beauty and light; it picks and chooses, instead of obeying the law which commands us to admire all that is admirable. A very pretty quarrel might be started here with our anarchist or hedonist in literature; but, leaving that on one side, we perceive why enthusiasm for the German critics will never overpower him. They, like Aristotle, fix their eyes on subject, design, idea, when they should be examining the execution, and teaching us to win from it delight.

That German æsthetics, which wrote their first page in Lessing's "Laocoon" and "Dramaturgie," had a liberating influence, our author concedes. But we must rise to the specular mount with Carlyle if we would do justice in this high debate, where Goethe's occasional slips, and even pretensions to a knowledge he did not always possess, may provoke us into miscalculation. His talks with Eckermann are "senilia." Yet there was surely a virtue of its own in "that singular wisdom," whether drawn from the eighteenth century or elsewhere, which would not let him degenerate into common-sense, while it combined the gifts of science and romance, gave him an "almost unique mastery of the tendencies of the morrow," and led him to serve under two flags—say, in "Faust" and in "Iphigenie"—with honour to both. Take exception we may, or should, to much in the Olympian that yet savours of Voltaire; his "modified Romanticism" did not fully appreciate the Middle Age; and we grant with Amiel a "secret dryness" in him of which our reading now forty

years continued has noted more than could at first appear credible. Is the most famous of "culture-men" not literary enough to please our Professor? No, for he is always harping on "character, conduct, personality," which, in letters, do not count. Shakespeare, the "Great Unknown," is quoted by way of evidence for this very doubtful axiom; and, on the strength of it, as on grounds more forcible, we are told that "the critical Goethe has too much the character of a superstition, now rather stale." After which it may be recommended, as trimming the balance, to read Carlyle on the "State of German Literature,"—a tract not altogether unseasonable, though written in 1827. Of Goethe it declares that,

if ever any man had studied Art in all its branches and bearings, from its origin in the depths of the creative spirit to its minutest finish on the canvas of the painter, on the lips of the poet, or under the finger of the musician, he was that man.

A little excessive perhaps; but even our critic writes that, "to find a better and more conscious craftsman of letters than Goethe, you may take the wings of the morning and put a girdle round the earth in vain."

Other Teutonic masters get handsome treatment, especially Novalis, Jean Paul, Schopenhauer, Heine, and Nietzsche. We are glad to see that Richter's "*Vorschule der Ästhetik*" is not only praised for matter and style, as it well deserves, but is judged worthy of translation. On the aphorisms and hints which Novalis bequeathed, excellent things are spoken. But we must hasten on to our foremost Englishmen who cluster round Coleridge at Highgate, learning from his sibylline utterances, in which were glorious isles of light amid seas of confusion, how to judge between base and sublime. Coleridge, to Professor Saintsbury, is a creed no less than Aristotle and Longinus, if we should not say much more. It is a small thing to affirm, in comparison with such an estimate, that no influence equal to his had been exercised since Johnson's days in England. Few, however, will be prepared to grant Coleridge's absolute originality when he makes of imagination, "realising and disrealising," the touchstone whereby to prove poetic genius. We cannot overlook his

fourteen months in German latitudes, amid the movement of ideas which filled with discussion and adorned with immortal poems the eighteenth century at its close. Fichte is only one of the philosophic Pleiad who did not, assuredly, borrow their light from Coleridge, while he, as certainly, could discover in no English volume the ideas that lend a radiance so piercing to the "*Biographia Literaria*." Coleridge is great, with powers inherent and divine, marvellous on Shakespeare, and the very "*anima poetæ*" for which English letters were waiting. But if we deduct from Coleridge as critic what he owes to Kant and other mystics—for such in effect the Germans were, in regard to the essences with which poetry deals—what would be left of him? A musical dreamer, keenly sensible to pleasure-giving sounds. Kant, Lessing, Goethe had risen before Coleridge dawned on the horizon; why should we not let them shine in their order? Everything that Coleridge took he made his own, says Professor Saintsbury, and he has untold wealth besides. That is altogether true; but his debt to the Germans cannot be overlooked.

Therefore, though Longinus has written "the greatest critical book in the world," Coleridge surpasses him in extent, subtlety, magic, and is a maker as well as a judge of the highest excellence. He is Hazlitt's master; but Hazlitt, though second only to the author of "*Christabel*," was parochial, insular, not widely furnished with reading, and is a rock of offence to those who demand that a critic shall have ranged over other literatures in order to appraise his own. Charles Lamb did not lose by the infinite talk of his comrade at Christ's Hospital, "the inspired charity boy." De Quincey was a German student, but he would not fail to seize on the more recondite and scarcely tangible issues that Coleridge was ever suggesting in rhetoric or style—the opium-eater's lifelong preoccupations. When these thoughts were in the air, Philistines, however sparkling or scornful, might quit the field. Jeffrey and Gifford, men of the old school which had no philosophy, could not so much as understand what the new critics were saying: it was too high for them. Macaulay laughed at Carlyle's "*Signs of the Times*." Yet

Macaulay, whose power of narrative and dissertation keeps him still with us, knew that he himself never wrote a page of literary judgment worth preserving. Wilson's "*Noctes Ambrosianæ*" belongs to things dead and forgotten. In England the Romantic triumph was so complete that a lull ensued until Matthew Arnold, deriving from Greek and French a sort of temperate Neo-Classicism, renewed the controversy, and won his laurels at the hands of admiring though not convinced opponents. With him and Walter Pater our third volume, to all intents, is closed.

Arnold would never have denied that he was following in the steps of a man, less philosophic by far than Coleridge, but a genuine poet, though not universally celebrated, and perhaps without a rival in the middle style of criticism—we mean Sainte-Beuve. The story of his brilliant though chequered career shows, by almost a Greek fatality, how France, after striving to get loose from its classic bonds, fell under them once more. It is a drama in little that represents the greater world-action, so to call it, for ever associated with Diderot, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, which triumphed during the Romantic period, and then slowly went down before those Latin instincts of law and order through which revolutions on the banks of the Seine always revert to absolute government. Professor Saintsbury has not suffered a truth so fundamental to escape him. French prose went as wild as it knew how; French poetry fought and conquered its freedom in the "battle of *Hernani*"; but these are episodes, not the main adventure, in the literary epic which Paris pursues through the centuries. We say Paris, and the expression is not a figure of speech; for Paris to a French man of letters never can cease to be the ideal spectator, the judge at the *Dionysia* whose award is final; and, however select, Paris will also always be the crowd.

On this not uninteresting point, Mr. Walkley, whose "*Dramatic Criticism*" raises the cognate problem, would, we hope, agree with our contention. His acute, wide-glancing lectures, with a firm hold on Aristotle, show us what playgoers require, and how the boards have determined the nature of tragedy. Literature does, indeed,

speak home to the individual ; but in France, whatever its form, it is not a recluse ; it addresses the salon or the stage, and would die without applause. On the other hand, our Professor maintains, not without reason, that the drama can live, though divorced from literature. Hence the critic, whether of the "Café Procope" or the "Revue des Deux Mondes," is nothing if not rhetorical. He writes to be understood by a company whom he will not presume to teach. A German lectures to his learned brethren of the craft ; an Englishman breaks out in print, because it is his humour. But, when the audience is our first concern, we must be intelligible, persuasive, and not fatiguing. French criticism, observant of these rules, is one of the prettiest things in the world. But "*facilitatis specie decipimur*"; it is not so profound as it is pleasant ; nay, like some other less innocent diversions, it unfits us for meditation. Nor can we be surprised if it favours a sceptical indifference to the subject, is psychological in the extreme, plays about among images, follows sidelights, and is an entertainment even when it affects to lay down a theory. Thus, by a seeming contradiction, it is at once formal and disengaged. But under every shape it remains what we moderns call Epicurean ; its first and last word is enjoyment, its secret of method is impression.

Take Diderot for a proof and instance. That "disorderly genius" made his own the hints of another "critique" than Boileau's. He followed up the modern lines which had appeared in Fénelon, Fontenelle, and the Abbé Prévost. He gave of his wealth to Lessing, nay, to Goethe ; and his enthusiasm for Richardson leads in the prose romance with a flourish of trumpets. He can enjoy Terence, analyse Seneca, mark the limits of the French theatre, illustrate literature by painting, and light up the salon from his books. He is inventive, subtle, quick to perceive, open on every hand to pleasure ; his universal spirit, says Professor Saintsbury, gives the "idea" of modern criticism. Not "*nil admirari*," which is Puritan-Stoical ; nor "*quidquid agunt homines*," which would land us in indiscriminating realism ; but the live apprehension of beauty wherever found, and transport

as its reward : that is Diderot's principle. Theory, if you please, may come after ; it is even fitting that reason should justify what taste has appropriated ; but, as execution is the thing in an author, feeling is the response to it in a critic. This we might pronounce with Shakespeare to be the marriage of true minds, the centre and sum of literature. By attitude, by suggestion, Diderot announces it, and so he arrives at his place of pride.

There is more to be said on this question, to which we shall return. Enough now that we can go forward and meet the Redcross knight, Chateaubriand, who inherits the mantle of Diderot, but wields a Christian sword. Everywhere, of course, we bear in mind that Rousseau, himself no textual critic, has sown the seed which breaks out in flame of inspiration. Rousseau is Madame de Staël's master, and lends his passionate melting charm to "René"; while Joubert followed Diderot in his youth. To Chateaubriand our Professor is absolutely just—an achievement far from easy when we reflect on M. le Vicomte's "pose" in front of his looking-glass and think of him as the French Byron. He was, however, great in his day, and is greater in ours, if we measure him by the influence he has exerted on style, criticism, and even religion ; for he struck all these chords to effect ; as a virtuoso indeed and theatrically ; yet we never know when the spirit will not seize and ravish him out of affectation into the third heaven. Dislike the man as we may, his "Génie du Christianisme" wins on us by its recognition of history ; by the range and depth of insight which vindicate, not so much the Middle Age, as Milton and all romance, from Neo-Classic prejudice ; and by its new language, instinct with life, coloured, sonorous, melancholy, the finest rhetoric since Bossuet, in a key more modern. "Les Martyrs" and the rest are steeped in literary hues, but Nature is always striking in to remind us of the unfathomable deeps, the infinite horizons, until we learn that books are but pages in its all-encompassing volume. The artificial in trappings and gesture remains ; it is no longer the whole. To our reviewer Chateaubriand seems "the first great practitioner of imaginative criticism since Longinus himself." We will not grant quite so much,

remembering Schiller's "Poems," Goethe's "Meister," and Jean Paul, even if we cannot break a lance for the Schlegels. But if ever the "grand style," which Matthew Arnold found so seldom, went with judgment of writings and of literary ideas, it did so in the magnificent *bravuras* of this Breton Catholic. To all succeeding Romantics he is ancestor; his rhythms are echoed in George Sand, Gautier, and above all in Flaubert. His flag was carried into battle by Victor Hugo. So late as 1865 his not too friendly critic, Sainte-Beuve, declared that he "was greater than any man of our age," but that it was an age of decadence. "An Epicurean," he defined him to be, "enhanced by the notion of honour, plumed with imagination." So we may leave him, with "René" and "Atala" to serve as models which, by their very form, were destructive of Neo-Classic pedantry.

We have come to the Romantic Hegira, the year 1830, to Hugo and Sainte-Beuve. All that Professor Saintsbury tells us of these remarkable companions will be read with interest, if not wholly with agreement. As regards their critical powers and enterprises, there is not a great deal to add. But simultaneously with the appearance of his third volume, M. Léon Séché has published the long-expected monograph on Sainte-Beuve, his "ideas" and his "manners," to which the correspondence with M. and Mme. Juste Olivier forms a necessary pendant. M. Séché has not attempted a "Life," in the proper sense of the term. He proposes to deal with the "Causeries du Lundi," on which Professor Saintsbury is eloquent and copious, in a later publication. But his researches leave no chapter unopened in the curious double existence of a man who was everything by turns—Romantic, Liberal-Catholic, Jansenist, mystic, and at last sceptic, as he had been at the beginning; irresistible when he chose, tantalising, sensual, vindictive, petty, the acolyte of a dozen divinities, yet a critic beyond compare on the lower levels. It is impossible not to like Sainte-Beuve, or not to be angry with him. Contempt follows on the heels of our admiration for one who was guilty of treason towards Victor Hugo, who proved ungracious to De Vigny, cruel to Lamartine, and who went surely down from the

heights he had once climbed to the dilettantism which reads only in order to experience a fresh thrill.

Professor Saintsbury pleads against our judging Sainte-Beuve severely. But we may cite, as somewhat less kind, the founder of that celebrated review, the *Globe*, in which Sainte-Beuve opened his literary career. M. Dubois of Rennes cradled him into fame, saw his culmination, and spoke words of weight over his memory when he had passed away. "The *Globe*," says M. Dubois, "was romantic or rather liberal in poetry and literature, an enemy of the false religion of the classics." Sainte-Beuve joined it in 1824. He had a style of his own, not hung round with fripperies from the new school; and in a few years he discovered his powers. "Joseph Delorme" showed that he could write strenuous verse; he converted Hugo to modern ideas; and it is anything but pleasant to remember that he seduced Madame Hugo from her allegiance, desolated the poet's home, and drove him thereby on the irregular course which made of his life a tragi-comedy. M. Dubois, judging the critic after forty years, sees in him a "true sympathy for all that is fair, pure, and good." His philosophy, says this keen observer, was one without hope; his nerves affected some otherwise brilliant studies; yet he turned upon the diseases of the time a piercing light, and for all the writers whom he passed in review his verdict was like that of posterity. His wonderful style, transparent and incisive, was a blade finely tempered, a velvet glove which caressed the wound that the sword had made. At last, however, he dwelt on imperfections only to explain them; his evening was calm; and he could interpret loyally views which he did not share.

All no less admirably said than true to life! M. Dubois acknowledges the mixed nature of his quondam friend and pupil; he would have done more had he seen the articles which Sainte-Beuve dispatched to M. Olivier when the latter was editing the *Revue Suisse*. There, as in domino, the Parisian criticised freely, and often in a malicious aside, his personal enemies, skilful to make these strictures anonymous, while the good Olivier had no resource but to print them. In his correspondence Sainte-Beuve is still

more unkind to those he hates. It is not a charming picture. The man was inferior to the artist and spoiled the critic, though in Hugo's extravagance and De Vigny's too solemn parade there was fair game for satire. At Madame Hugo's petition he spared the exile of Hauteville House during the Empire; and, when "Hernani" was given in 1869, the vestiges of the ancient flame appeared beneath a lifetime's cinders. But Sainte-Beuve, who had for a moment thought himself Romantic, was now something more like the Neo-Classic. Here is the singular *dénoûment* of his travelling for well-nigh half a century among the masterpieces of the world. He returned towards the Grand Siècle; he prepares us for M. Brunetière's apotheosis of Bossuet and Racine.

Many who know little else that Sainte-Beuve wrote have dipped into his "Port Royal." He was busy with it at intervals during thirty years. But for the impressive opening, earnest beyond his wont, we are indebted to Lausanne, the Oliviers, and the devout Alexandre Vinet. It is a magazine of biography on Plutarch's design, lives compared in a series which allows full play to the art of criticism, as understood by this ever-advancing student. St. Francis de Sales and St. Cyran, Jansenius and Bossuet, Pascal and Montaigne, afford to the artist that spectacle of conflict on a great scale which he loves for its changing lights. By one device or another he brings into court Balzac the elder, Corneille, Racine, Molière, nay, even Voltaire and Joseph de Maistre. When, however, little by little, the religious glow dies away, and the author's curiosity leads him to examine the poor understudies that are left, we cease to be interested. To an impatient modern, the last volumes are not so much as "*tolerabiles ineptiæ*." This was Sainte-Beuve's weakness; he dropped the field-glass to take up the microscope. Already we see bearing down upon us the spectre of science, documents showering in snowstorms out of archives, museums, private collections, and Wagner triumphing over Faust in a parchment wilderness. The method is so alluring because it is so easy. But if literary criticism be an art, these preludes cannot make the play.

"The whole man," said Sainte-Beuve, must be taken

into account if we would grasp what he has written. The man, yes, and his *milieu*, his pedigree, his evolution, as we now talk. Professor Saintsbury appears (though we are not sure) to hold the doctrine which subjects delight, as the organ of taste, to a long discipline, and compels it to pay for its enjoyment. In the "Lives of the Poets" Johnson had shown how agreeable was biography applied to literature. It was the English way that Sainte-Beuve followed in his "Literary Portraits," his famous "Mondays" and "New Mondays," though Véron seems first to have hit upon the idea. These displays were, in preparation and exhibition, miracles of learning, industry, and effect. They combined the talent of research with an astonishing power of improvisation, long days given to thought, and hours spent in a crisis which resembled fever. Nothing like them was ever done before; no one has equalled them since. Dubois warns us not to seek in them a painter of mighty strokes; they do not aim at the highest; they are mosaic and miniature, occasionally insignificant, and they feed our curiosity rather than our spirit. But assuredly they do not content themselves with giving a mere impression, although Sainte-Beuve, in describing his final manner, said, "*Je n'y mets pas d'enthousiasme.*" The sad and serious tone of the sceptic bids us remember that literature also is vanity; for we cannot escape our own beliefs, nor think with any but our own minds.

Here, then, the issue, long sought, comes into view. Professor Saintsbury, adopting Pater's dictum, concludes with him that "to feel the virtue of the poet or the painter, to disengage it, to set it forth—these are the three stages of the critic's duty." He is to interpret the vision that he has seen. Is it beautiful? He asks no more. Subject, incidents, moral, are nothing to him as a critic. Even the execution, if we do not mistake, falls into lovely moments, to be judged one by one. But where then shall we look for the "purification" which, not in drama exclusively, but in all literature worthy of the name, is to be wrought upon us? Has every poet the same virtue? And, if not, may the critic be dispensed from comparing one with another, as we do in fact compare them, finding a certain greatness in this

man, imperfection in that one, comfort and exaltation of spirit while we stay on the heights with some who have the lightning for their raiment, the sound of thunder in their voices, but feeling that the life has gone out of us when we consort too long with their opposites? Be it that to art, as to science and religion, nothing is common or unclean, yet we know of books, beautiful in form and language, that infect like the plague, that are decadent and suicidal in their tendency. Is the critic to welcome them for their exquisite make, filed speech, fervour of paganism? Or is there not a Higher Criticism which estimates these values in its summing-up?

We will go by experience in this matter as well as by theory. It is not enough to seize upon beautiful moments, for they have no unity comparable to that of a large design, a world in itself, like the "Odyssey," or Dante's pilgrimage, or the supreme plays in Shakespeare; even as impressions, it will be admitted, these living wholes are far beyond single lines, however magical. And if this be so, the intellect which grasps them, not less than that which created them, deserves to be named something better than feeling. Beauty in literature grows with intellect; the finer it is, the more it appeals to those rarer spirits who have passed beyond its lower forms. Who would prefer the sensuous lyrical poets to Homer and Sophocles? There is a difference in these things not to be put aside, therefore to be recognised as entering into the very idea of criticism. Before we make any application of it to life, it claims due rank in art. To neglect it is the sure way of hastening that fall from the greatest into mediocrity, which is ever at hand. Art itself requires that the delight afforded by it shall not be its ruin, nor the decadent, though, as Lucian cries, "fed on dew and ambrosia," its king. Our Professor grants all this implicitly when he declines to accept "Art for Art's sake only." The end is revelation of the Beautiful; but the traveller must not pause until he has climbed the summit and caught a glimpse of "the First and only Fair."

Yet again, poetry (which includes all genuine literature by certain affinities and inspirations), though it be

“seeming,” not mere truth of fact, has truth abiding in it—the law of the ideal, and an immanent ethic—the law of purity, justice, and kindness. Were it emptied of all these qualities, what would be its worth? Beautiful nonsense, an arrangement in vowel-sounds, at the best spoken music. But what we mean by it, and what Professor Saintsbury and Dr. Butcher mean, is a way easy and delightful to the trained soul, whereby, as Socrates learnt from his Muse, Diotima of Mantinea, we may mount the “ladder of perfection” and reach our eternal home. Criticism, if it be not unlike the creative works which it apprehends, is a song of degrees. It can no more be liberated from the jurisdiction of ethics than any other activity into which man breaks forth. Its delight and its beauty hold of the True, else they are pernicious fictions. They are shadows of the Good, or why should we allow them to win our hearts? By secret alchemy and an inevitable process, the aspects of the Infinite to which we give these names are continually passing one into the other. Dante perhaps is the high poet who combines them all more closely than Greek or even English singers. But they are present in every literature by which mankind lives; and it is the critic’s duty to set them in the fairest light.

I

THE GENIUS OF GEORGE ELIOT¹

GEORGE ELIOT is dead. She rests where the memory of mystic, contemplative Coleridge lingers still, in Highgate Cemetery. But her due was Westminster Abbey, could she have been admitted to Christian burial within its walls. Some day, perhaps, when the Religion of Despair has made her grave a place of pilgrimage, a line from Petrarca will serve to mark it out, and to perpetuate her creed touching the soul—such a line as this :

Quel foco è morto, e'l copre un picciol marmo.

For, however the spirit be quenched, this rare woman will not rest in a tomb unvisited, like the tomb of that Dorothea, writing whose story George Eliot so mournfully wept over her own. Her forward-looking glance must have beheld in prospect, if nothing more divine, yet still the meed of immortal renown wherewith Epicurean Horace might comfort his vanity. And, before her time, she has gone through "the strait and dreadful gate of Death" to join the choir invisible that peopled her heaven; though not their brightest invention can "make the gladness" of an unbelieving world. Not a glorious exchange for her long-lost faith in Christ! but it is all she desired to win, so far as we have been told. She would seem to have lived without God in the world, "a vacuum at the centre of her faith": did she die as one that had no hope? But she has become a great English classic, and ages hence her genius will be admired. She may even be set in the calendar on her birthday, and canonised as

¹ "The Works of George Eliot." In twenty volumes. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh and London. 1880.

Shakespeare is now ; she may elicit from many a reverence almost equal to his. And all the while she will be lying in the "unconsecrated" ground at Highgate Cemetery—a pitiable thought !

What she has written of her great hero Savonarola, whom she was held to resemble in cast of features as in texture of mind, is true enough concerning George Eliot herself. "Seldom," indeed, "have the mysteries of human character been presented in a way so likely to confound our facile knowingness." An American pilgrim, Grace Greenwood, says of her : "She impressed me at first as exceedingly plain, with the massive character of her features, her aggressive jaw, and evasive blue eyes. But as she grew interested and earnest in conversation, a great light flashed over or out of her face, till it seemed transfigured, while the sweetness of her rare smile was something quite indescribable. But Miss Evans seemed to me to the last lofty and cold. I felt that her head was among the stars—the stars of a winter night." Compare George Eliot's description of Savonarola—a reflected but conscious rendering of her own appearance : "In the act of bending, the cowl was pushed back, and the features of the monk had the full light of the tapers on them. They were very marked features, such as lend themselves to popular description. There was the high-arched nose, the prominent under lip, the coronet of thick dark hair above the brow, all seeming to tell of energy and passion ; there were the blue-grey eyes, shining mildly under auburn eyelashes, seeming, like the hands, to tell of acute sensitiveness." But all the regard she may claim, and justly, must not turn away our eyes from simple fact. During the twenty years of her celebrity she was pitied no less than she was wondered at. And the manner of her leaving life can but deepen our regret that some malign influence should have so wrought upon a noble woman, who was likewise, in her own sphere, a supreme writer.

For, I suppose, there is now no critic, not even Mr. Swinburne, who would refuse to allow her fine qualities. The world at large has recognised in the author of "Adam Bede" and "The Mill on the Floss" an artist who may rank with immortals, a genius creative of single

characters filled with breathing energy and of living groups as real as they are original. But not an artist only. Her mind was wide enough to contain philosophies; and if calm deliberate thought somewhat tempers her creating flame, it gives distinction too. It arouses a complex interest in the reader; it stirs a deeper chord than the idle story-teller could hope to reach. And it reveals a soul very strangely and even tragically mixed, "struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of delusion."

To feel strongly, with a certain quick and as it were passionate response to outward solicitations, is the material essence, not of all high genius, but of an artist's. And to express feeling in such beautiful or sublime or humourous forms as may strike the sense with admiration, overpower it with awe and astonishment, move it to uncontrollable pity or scorn or laughter, is the aim of an artist's working, whether in colour, or in light and shade, or in marble, or in speech, or in song. George Eliot's depth of feeling was so great that it sometimes marred the proportion and beauty of her stories by giving them an excessive painfulness. "The Spanish Gipsy," for example, is a book where suffering is overcharged until it becomes almost intolerable, and affects not so much the heart as the nerves. Whenever she chooses to call up her knowledge of life, George Eliot can depict the passions like one who has endured them in every pulse and vein. She has a clear memory, not of the sharp strokes alone that love and envy, ambition, sadness, or disappointment strike upon the soul, but of the light uncertain touches whereby most men are coaxed into a shape they would not choose. Her insight, that seems to leave no chamber of the heart unexplored, springs from her own susceptibility, and is sympathy before it is intuition.

Hence the living strength of her characters amid the multitude of wire-hung puppets that romance-writers are perpetually dancing up and down before us. It is true that she has, once and again, mistaken an artificial creature for a creation of art: Daniel Deronda himself is perhaps a thing all leather and prunella, "a wax doll" in the

disparaging critic's dialect. But the test of life in a world evoked by the imagination is that its personages shall move us to feel as if they were flesh and spirit, worthy to be loved or wept over, akin, as we are ourselves, to the soul of things good and evil.

Surely this is what we feel when Dinah Morris, the pale Methodist preacher, is standing under leafy boughs that screen her from the descending sun, her hands lightly crossed before her, the grey, simple, loving eyes turned on the people whom she is telling of the Divine love and their need of it, her mellow voice the while rising and falling with the varying emotions that make her village sermon a drama. Or when we are taken into the dairy at Hall Farm, to admire its coolness and purity, its fresh fragrance of new-pressed cheese, of firm butter, of wooden vessels perpetually bathed in pure water; its soft colouring of red earthenware and creamy surfaces, brown wood and polished tin, grey limestone and rich orange-red rust on the iron weights, and hooks, and hinges—and, beautiful enough to make us forget all these charms of a Loamshire idyl, the distracting, kitten-like maiden, Hetty Sorrel, with her springtide loveliness and her false air of star-browed innocence. Or as we watch her tripping along the avenue of limes and beeches, where the golden light is lingering among the upper boughs, only glancing down here and there on the purple pathway and its edge of faintly sprinkled moss—watch her moving joyously to meet an awful doom disguised in the form of young love and Arthur Donnithorne. Or as the fern-tufted, sunlit Chase changes to darkling fields, and Hetty wanders over them in search of a pool whose wintry depths may hide her, yet loiters, when she has found it between the bending trees, and does not hurry, because there is all the night to drown herself in.

Or again, shifting the scene to Florence, it is what we feel when Piero di Cosimo shows us in the sketch Tito Melema, his right hand uplifted, holding a wine-cup in the attitude of triumphant joy, but his face turned away from the cup, and intense fear in the dilated eyes and pallid lips, as though a cold stream were running in his veins, while fierce old Baldassarre is clutching the velvet-clad

arm of the fair young traitor that has forsaken him. Or, yet again, when Fedalma, bearing with her as in a funeral urn the ashes of her tribe, looks her last with noble speechless sadness on her Spanish lover, and the great waters swell round the boat and break upon it restlessly; and away, but not far, in the distance are gleaming the solitary shores that must bury her dead hopes and despairing faithfulness. Or, lastly, in that book of pitiful lapses from a foreseen and purposed heroism, when Dorothea and Rosamond clasp one another like two women in a shipwreck—the fit symbol of both their lives that destiny had interwoven in a common ruin.

What vivid soul-painting is here! For, as we walk through the portrait gallery of noble women where George Eliot is our guide, and survey the features of Romola and Janet, Gwendolen and Dorothea and Maggie Tulliver, we are conscious that it is not so much their beauty, though majestic or proud, that makes them gazed upon, but a certain radiance streaming out from the purity in heart, the strong yearning towards good, that the weakest among them cannot altogether lose. A theatrical scenic innocence or repentance they have not always; they might fail on the stage, but it would be for lack of the dramatic situation that shows, even to idle spectators, a soul embodied and recognisable in deeds commensurate with its greatness. In the story the pure soul is ever felt, and at last breaks through the clouds.

We may study, to the same intent, the never-worn-out sagacity that tracks along its creeping ways of thought Mr. Casaubon's dim life and uninspired self-love, even though he wanders in a wilderness of bypaths, and knows not how to strike upon "the vividness of an idea, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action," but, present at the great banquet of the world's life, remains himself hungry and shivering. Or take again the chronicle of Mr. Bulstrode's pale-eyed fears, his daily strivings against conscience (now become his dearest foe), though he does but aim at promoting the glory of God by such a tightened grasp upon the riches from which his soul indeed sits loose, and in the acquisition whereof he has committed only hypothetical sin, deserving contingent pardon. Or

that contrast, so little to be expected in the writings of George Eliot, to her own ideal of womanhood—we mean Rosamond Vincy. In this consummate sketch, beauty as radiant as garden flowers under the evening light, fineness of tone and finished accomplishments, instead of wearing their native grace, are made as repulsive as the livid tints of the grave, as wicked as vice, and more exasperating. It is genius like nature, and not a mechanic's cunning, that has robbed the starry vision of its halo, demonstrating that human feeling alone can subdue human affection to itself when our season of first delight in beauty is vexed by the world's cares. Rosamond Vincy can move us to pity her still in an hour of trouble; and this is a sign that George Eliot, though making her marvellously inhuman, has not crossed the boundary drawn by right instinct, to search out some monstrous thing in the gloom where the grotesque and the ghastly of late romance have their fit abode.

With Furies dripping blood from their snaky tresses or scattering flame out of waving brands, she has no acquaintance except in Æschylus the thunderous and Eleusinian, or by the hearsay of those that saw Paris aflame with petroleum. She has not painted a Medusa, nor even a modern Mary Stuart.¹ Among her creations we look in vain for a miraculous perfect villain—a Count Francesco Cenci, or Count Guido Franceschini. With the latter Tito Melema is not properly comparable. (It is curious, by the way, that we Northerns have a superstition about villains when at the noontide of their badness; we look for them in the South, and borrow them from Greeks or Italians.) But Guido is marked by a super-subtle disbelief in goodness of any kind; he rages unrelentingly against the deceit which calls itself innocence. Tito is, at most, a Guido Franceschini in the bud. He dies too early, and has not failed often enough, nor felt wretchedness and penury enough in his young days, to harden into that kneaded fire as of hellish adamant. And

¹ Read—or rather, do not read—"Chastelard" and "Bothwell," by Mr. A. C. Swinburne, as final proof that the age of chivalry is gone, and the long-worshipped Queen of Scots brought low indeed—to the level of Voltaire's bewitched Circean "Pucelle." The triumph of Tragedy!

Grandcourt, though of a like paste with these, is too slight and negative; only misery could have blown up the roaring flame that would anneal his pride and indolence to scorching enamel. George Eliot prefers to tell us of inexperienced, weak Adam, who hardly thinks of virtue or vice at all, but is overcome by the scent of fruits in autumn, and pleads that had the temptation not been so surprisingly pleasant, he would never have dreamt of touching them.

And, perhaps, she has chosen wisely. For really the supply of villains does not seem likely to fail—at any rate in literature. It is more to her honour that she creates by combining and refashioning what she has seen in the mind of man or in nature, thereby securing a beautiful and intelligible analogy with those true sources of emotion, than that she should excite unqualified repulsion and incredulity by inflicting on us something strained and impossible, and, for that cause, ineffectual. Apparently she never knew an Iago off the stage, and has not been solicitous about the creation of a counterfeit—perhaps, among other reasons, because she had ceased to believe in a place where he might meet with his deserts. Her subtlety and depth of conception, the compressed energy, sword-like edge, and grave decisiveness of her words might have warranted her in emulating the style of Shakespeare and moulding Iago to the modern. But she would not copy a book, though the greatest: and her art, if always reminiscence, is never an author's plagiarism. Iago, whose existence some of the older critics, though versed in possibilities, have stickled at, lay out of her horizon. But his make and bearing are nature itself, and would win our hearts to him, when set by the side of many a "lovely monster" now walking the world. That George Eliot shrank from adding to their multitude proves that her genius was bounded? Yes, by the limits of Art.

Or, finally, we may turn towards the wide, clear illumination that has wondrously recovered and lit up for us Medicean Florence, its colours fresh and glowing, as if it were another Pompeii preserved under the piled-up ashes of history and historians. In its light at last stands bathed the shadowy Rembrandt-like greatness of

Savonarola, a name that has never died off men's lips, yet has held in it an uncertain significance, as though troubling the conscience of every one that spoke it, filling men's minds with scruples that confused the lines not only of parties but of religious convictions. Now we may see him—not as the painters have seen him always, with their childlike unquestioning eyes, in his white Dominican habit as he lived, or stripped of it and moving blindly towards the towering gibbet which reminded the Florentines uneasily of an earlier form of torturing guilt or innocence that had long been laid aside. But we may see the inmost man and the soul, that like flawed crystal, even where it has suffered violence, holds the sunlight, though refracted and discoloured. If the one unrivalled subject of poetry be human character in powerful conflict and interaction, then may we more than match the tragedy of Prometheus the Fire-bringer with this of Frà Girolamo, related as it is in prose. For the historic Florentine and the mythical Titan were of one temper; they must be memorable to all time, each for renouncing his own joy, that he might raise men to the highest deeds of which they were capable.

And in the history, not in the legend, is there, besides “the reviling, and the torture, and the death-throe,” an agony of sinking from the vision of glorious achievement into that deep shadow where the fallen teacher can only say, “I count as nothing; darkness encompasses me; but the light that I saw was the true light.” George Eliot might have insisted upon this consideration herself, for she felt it, though not touching her hero. As she says in one of her quaint mottoes, “There be who hold that the deeper tragedy were a Prometheus bound, not after but before he had well got the celestial fire into the *narthex* whereby it might be conveyed to mortals.” That deeper tragedy, she has, though in her own way, written.

Moreover, Prometheus was not man—he was only man-loving; and he was at length to pull down evil from its sovereign seat. We cannot pity him with the tender fellow-feeling that Savonarola's faults do but increase. This man shakes us with changing tones and great human words, as in the sermon of the Duomo: “Behold, I am

willing—lay me on the altar ; let my blood flow, and the fire consume me ; but let my witness be remembered among men that iniquity shall not prosper for ever.” By a gesture of the delicate hands, that seem to have in them an appeal against all hardness, he bows us to our knees. Like a sceptred deity, he points the way back for us to the destiny we would fain escape ; but the power lies all in a mild glance expressing that simple human fellowship which is the bond between us.

Therefore we do but feel our admiring loyalty suffused with tenderness when we come to know him well—when his character appears to hold some base alloy in conjunction with its finer elements. We are sure that “his imperious need of ascendancy, his enigmatic visions, his false certitude about the Divine intentions, never ceased, in his own large soul, to be enobled by that fervid piety, that passionate sense of the Infinite, that active sympathy, that clear-sighted demand for the subordination of selfish interests to the general good, which he had in common with the greatest of mankind.” And we cannot but hope that George Eliot is delivering the verdict of the ages as she grandly concludes : “It was the fashion of old, when an ox was led out for sacrifice to Jupiter, to chalk the dark spots and give the offering a false show of unblemished whiteness. Let us fling away the chalk, and boldly say—the victim is spotted, but it is not therefore in vain that his mighty heart is laid on the altar of men’s highest hopes.” Could such words be true of her who wrote them, too !

If, then, Dorothea be the noblest character George Eliot has drawn, and Dinah Morris the purest, and Maggie Tulliver the most affecting, and Adam Bede the most manly, and Tito Melema and Rosamond Vincy the most marvellously clever, yet, as drawn from history, and not a free representation, Savonarola is the greatest. Here is none of the cheap invention where ignorance finds itself able and at ease, but an invention that is the very eye of research, and that holds the clue to those invisible thoroughfares which are the lurking-places of anguish and delight, inspiration or mania, crime or benevolence, and thus become the real, though little suspected, channels of

success or disaster. The story called "Romola" is history made present and romance turned epic. What praise can be higher than this?

Creative faculty, then, upon a scale large enough to be discernible by the multitude, and to draw forth their instinctive plaudits, George Eliot certainly has. While her types are all as distinctly marked as they are the genuine yield of experience, some of them may claim to be species never before described. And these, being original as well as lifelike, must win for her a portion of that glory which the world has bestowed on Goethe as the maker of Mephistopheles, and much too generously on the sublime lunatic that invented Jean Valjean and Gavroche. But genius strikes a deep root in the living earth that brings it to the sun; it has its peculiar complexion, resulting more closely than we can ever tell from the frame it dwells in. A woman cannot change from being Sappho, though her song may be as fine or as sweet as any of her brother poets'. There are some now who imagine that the passion-wrought antique Lesbian has survived, or transmigrated rather, into our present age; that she is making her dreams pass again, if not through the cold mass of marble or colour, yet into the drama and romance. For the first time since authorship began, it is now possible to form a group of imperishable writers from women alone. Every country in Europe may boast of a great name; France has inherited the glory and the shame that cling to the greatest—George Sand. But is there in England a woman worthy to share the throne with Shakespeare as his equal or his consort? The fame of Elizabeth Barrett Browning cannot be divided—any more than the tender beauty of those "Sonnets from the Portuguese," which even she could not surpass—from that of a grandly analytic poet. And Shakespeare's choice—if he be minded to exchange Anne Hathaway for a genius that will appreciate *his* sonnets—must lie between George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë.

But perhaps he has a taking already for one of his own delightful creations, though we cannot remember a "great soul" among them. In any case, we need hardly choose for him. Charlotte Brontë, out of her intense and eager

life, has created those strange true beings that have no parallel, except in lives that shrink from the pain of recording their own anguish—Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, M. Paul Emanuel. They deserve to be thought miracles of unconscious art, for in them the most opposing qualities are fused, by some secret passionate feeling, into mere and absolute reality. There is no need to prove they are alive—we see them live; perhaps for a chapter or two they represent the reader's own past to him. Not of outward accidents, but of the inward spirit is deep tragedy an issue, and Charlotte Brontë has proved to the world's astonishment that "we may be strangely moved by what is not unusual." Ordinary human life has within it the sublime elements of pity and terror—the pathos of loving or not being loved, the dreadfulness of parting and death; but how seldom do the commonalty on any level, high or low, reflect upon it! George Eliot comforts our dulness with a word, saying that if we had such a keen sense of every day, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat; we should die of "that roar which lies on the other side of silence,"

Yet herein, as the critic has well insisted, Charlotte Brontë finds the empire of her genius and her supremacy. With such common materials as the sombre moods of a governess earning her bread in a country house, or in a *pension* at Brussels, the slight occurrences of a fête-day among schoolgirls, the monotony of a summer vacation passed alone, the beginnings and growth of attachment between a teacher of French literature and an English Mademoiselle, in neither of whose lives did there appear to be crime or mystery or grandeur of suffering,—with these broken bits of faintly tinted glass Charlotte Brontë has kindled for us a kaleidoscope of burning gem-like colours; she has wrought, not a fantastic, but a true and serious pitifulness in the story of unnoticed men and women, to the very quick of experience and with overpowering vastness. Think of Lucy Snowe, meant to be as unromantic as Monday morning and as cold as her name, kept by social condition and the events that fill her days (or leave them almost empty) as far from romance as any Sarah Smith in a factory, and how

marvellous a thing it is that she takes the heart and the fancy like Ophelia or Juliet! What directness and simplicity of action! What an easy, robust, picturesque speech! And how few strokes of the sure pencil ere the scene stands out, finished and clear! In no other Englishwoman—if this creature with Celtic blood in her veins was English—has the “fine frenzy,” the passionate inspiration, as we now term it, of the poet’s gaze, created visions at once so like nature and so weird.

Not in George Eliot, we think, even when she is telling over again Maggie Tulliver’s fall and ruin. While with Charlotte Brontë we seem to be absorbed in the life that is acting itself out, with George Eliot we stand always, though it be only a little, on one side; we resemble the chorus and not the players. It has been urged that self-possession like this is too intellectual, too reflexive, and argues a dull, over-fed temperament, incapable of the divine exhilaration that genius—and opium—brings on. Is it the chorus which makes the drama, or is it the players? True: but George Eliot’s admirers will rejoin that chorus and actors may be resolved into a more primitive, yet not less poetical form—the epic representation, namely, of the living world, which is at once a panorama and a creed. For the solitary figure we may take the people of a city, the dwellers on a country-side; for the destiny of an individual we may sing of the love that mankind feel for earth whence they spring, the thoughts they cherish concerning heaven to which they look up. As the chorus gave expression to human feeling on the tragic stage, so, when it is no longer a separate theme, when it runs indistinguishably through all the music of the rhapsodist, it may shadow forth the eternal laws by which all things move and are. George Eliot has this greatness to herself, amongst Englishwomen, and Charlotte Brontë can no more take it from her than Jane Austen can. Doubtless it implies a certain affinity of her mind with the masculine, which is considered to dwell chiefly upon laws and abstractions. Goethe has often been called the Poet of Science; George Eliot perhaps deserves the name of the Epic Pythoness of Science.

But she was not exalted to the tripod of this new Delphi and poetic oracle of the nineteenth century without a severe probation. She had painful memories of the time when, as Maggie Tulliver, she hoped that to master "Latin, Euclid, and logic would be a considerable step in masculine wisdom." And it was then she would take Aldrich out into the fields, and look off her book towards the sky, where the lark was twinkling, or to the reeds and bushes by the river, from which the waterfowl rustled forth on its anxious, awkward flight—and would feel with a startled sense that the relation between Aldrich and this living world was extremely remote to her. "The eager heart," she says touchingly, "gained faster and faster on the patient mind." Pity that as the days went by she came to imagine that Kant and Spinoza and Mr. Herbert Spencer were the true fountains of wisdom. But at last she felt herself converted to the new formula, which seems to run in this wise: "There is no God, but Science is His oracle."

Now the Pythoness, as we know, wrote indifferent hexameters, not nearly so musical as the lines of the "Iliad." In them, however, she made clear to Greeks the mind of Apollo. She kept the public conscience, and was the echo of a divine voice in the cities of men; she rebuked moral obliquity; she poured out her light upon the entanglements and labyrinthine deceits wherein wickedness seeks to lie hid. She must have had a vision, then, such as science or inspiration may bestow, of the essential, right, and infinite relations of the wide world; it was her feeling of that beauteous order that lifted her above the multitude. Such a vision did George Eliot think that she had. To teach the facts of science was not her calling, but to distil from them the true religion of mankind, to clothe its mysterious sayings in the finest imagery, and to interpret its bearings on the life of every day.

But where shall the modern Pythoness erect her tripod and deliver the messages of the new gods? Times are changed since heralds were sent with presents to Delphi and Dodona that they might bear back the god-spoken word. And now the Pythoness must be

content with *Blackwood's Magazine* as a channel of utterance, or must scatter her mystic leaves as a three-volume novel. This may seem to be cheapening vital truths; it has led the superficial to deny that a new religion was coming to the birth, because they nowhere perceived the solemn garb of a prophet, or heard of any fresh Bible except the Book of Mormon. Upon us it is incumbent to dismiss these childish fancies, and to recognise in the novel its usurped but now unassailable function as an instrument of scientific and religious teaching. There is no likelihood that the Epic of our century will be written in verse. But, surely, more than one fragment is already extant of an epic in prose where we may view the movements of thought and the succession of determining events as in a looking-glass. Victor Hugo, Balzac, George Sand, are the historians that offer us a faithful saddening chronicle of the newer France. Across the Rhine we see at least one well-known writer, Berthold Auerbach, in whose pages the king and the peasant move along, and life in Southern Germany casts up, as from below the horizon, a parting gleam of medieval romance and piety into the modern sky.

It is natural that poetry should freeze at the chill breath of science and unbelief, and amid the roar of business in our great cities. To an age so curiously observant as ours, so disdainful of earnest convictions, so utterly embroiled in sifting particulars one by one, neither the epic calmness nor the dramatic greatness would seem attainable. But when poetry fails us, we are driven upon sounding the possibilities of prose. This George Eliot was born to do; and her finest and least mortal work is that wherein she has striven, not to apply the technical language of science in matters of feeling, nor to win a reputation for herself as an artist in verse, but to frame her own wide experience into an epic whole. And it is in this, her peculiar province, that she has found no English rival or compeer—in the large Homeric representation of the living world. She fulfils her calling as a Pythoness by moulding history so as to suggest or enforce the theories with which science has imbued her. Thanks to her deep feeling and her marvellous gift of writing as

she feels, the dry light of knowledge shines golden across her vision, shot through with orient beams of love and pity.

Hence the wide field of her view, the throng of personages that occupy or move over it, the impartial and seemingly indifferent survey of high and low, believers and infidels, pious and wicked, pure and impure; hence the absence of a hero, except when a symbolic rather than a real character is meant; hence the disregard of conventional situations and stereotyped endings, which sometimes leads to neglect of the entanglement and corresponding dénouement required by art; hence, especially, the minor interest attaching to the tale of love where the love itself is not complicated with a larger motive. She has, indeed, written in her most affecting work of the love that is "a potent fatality"; but she prefers it when, to quote a fine-toned sentence, "it acknowledges an effect from the imagined light of unproven firmaments, and has its scale set to the grander orbits of what hath been and shall be." From all which it follows that her modern epic is far wider in its range of phenomena than the ancient or medieval, while even more minute in depicting them. And as it is not inspired by the genial muse of Homer nor by the Christian grace of Dante—as an abstract system rules instead of divine religious instincts—no wonder George Eliot has been thought to deal hardly with her creations, as if she were an *Anangke* or Fate that could not be propitiated.

When we view the work complete—and, logically, "Daniel Deronda" carried it to the final chapter, after which we could expect only repetitions or variations of an accustomed theme—we see that its parts fall of their own accord into a certain grouping. To the first series belong "Scenes from Clerical Life," "Adam Bede," "The Mill on the Floss," "Silas Marner," and "Felix Holt." To the second very distinct series belong "The Spanish Gipsy," "Romola," "Daniel Deronda," "Theophrastus Such." The link that combines these groups and gives a point of transition from one to the other is "Middlemarch," though in order of time it succeeded "Romola."

Her first series, which is likewise the most popular,

may be taken to represent George Eliot's earliest and most vivid experience. Her second is founded rather upon culture than feeling, and grows more and more theoretic, until at last it seems to melt away into an airy cloud of abstractions. Between "Scenes from Clerical Life" and "Theophrastus Such" there is a difference as wide as between a painting in oils and a pencilled outline. Her first book abounds in lusty life, her last is a study of comparatively bloodless shades; for unbelieving theories will blight the richest experience and spoil its humour. In her early writings—we do not mean her Essays—George Eliot draws from the fountain of youth; she prizes the living soul that she has known above any lesson it may afford in the disturbing light of newly-imported philosophies. She may then have held somewhat by a wise remark of Goethe's: that a rich and manifold life passing across our field of vision has a certain worth in itself, and will convey a moral, though we should not point it. In her latest books the lesson is inculcated with such abstract clearness that the figures which exemplify it sink down into symbols, like the painted Vices and Virtues in a miracle play.

From their searching and minute accuracy of detail, and their multitude of sharp outlines, the earlier group of her stories have all but incurred dispraise at the hands of many critics as no better than photographs, due to mechanical observation, not to genuine art. This condemnation always excepts "Adam Bede" and the biography of Maggie Tulliver. And, certainly, it will not be denied that, when fine touches are made too perceptible, they weary an eye accustomed to large, bold drawing; just as the small Oriental alphabets, though exquisite, fatigue an ordinary sight. One can fancy the impatient novel-reader flinging aside "Silas Marner" or "Amos Barton" with the sense that he has been counting all the bricks in a wall or trying to decipher the dust on a fly's wing in the microscope. George Eliot, however, had a design in her dulness, and defends it from criticism.

I share with you (she says) the sense of oppressive narrowness, but it is necessary that we should feel it. Does not science tell us that its highest striving is after the attainment of a unity which

shall bind the smallest things with the greatest? In natural science, I have understood, there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which every single object suggests a vast sum of conditions. It is surely the same with the observation of human life.

Thus, then, she would, as it were, lay upon her photographic outlines the soft blooming colour of the epic unity and life; the details fall beyond an artist's consideration only when severed from the electric current which endows them with unseen energies and far-reaching consequence. And this, perhaps, is true so long as the human proportion (art's essential postulate even where it least is indicated) be not broken by dissection into the infinitely little or by its disappearance in the infinitely great. Her most taking story, "Adam Bede," is that wherein George Eliot has kept this proportion, we think, quite faithfully. Our comfortable sense in reading it is a proof of the practised eye that has here disposed the figures on a canvas neither too large nor too small, with due regard to the perspective and standing-point of life rather than the laws of science.

However much, then, we may blame the photographic hardness, the dull and painstaking flatness even, of her work upon occasion, George Eliot has painted life in the country with a simple warmth and grace that lead many to quote "Hermann and Dorothea," and to speak as we have spoken of the "Loamshire Idyls." This attractive word "Idyl"—now fast losing the significance it formerly had, and becoming synonymous with Tennyson's poems and the "Morte d'Arthur"—may in some loose and large sense describe "Silas Marner," "Janet's Repentance," and "Adam Bede." Passages of rural beauty or humour we shall, indeed, find interspersed through her volumes, until we reach the over-speculative "Daniel Deronda." For when all the other gods and goddesses have been dissolved into their lucid atoms, George Eliot will worship still her kindly Mother Earth, to whom, as she says, we owe it, that "always there is seed being sown silently and unseen, and everywhere there come sweet flowers without our foresight or labour. For though we reap what we sow, yet Nature has love over and above that justice, and gives

us shadow and blossom and fruit that come from no planting of ours."

With happy insight she lights up for us the primeval mystery of association, that, long before Arcadia and Sicilia were praised in song, or the gathering of the vintage in Attica was become world-famous for its tragedy, had consecrated to Religion things entirely common. Through her eyes we perceive how natural a thing it is when peasants hold the plough sacred and dedicate the wain to Ceres and Cybele. Why should seedtime and harvest not be festivals of the gods, and the implements of husbandry holy, when the early and the latter season give cause to venerate the beneficent, simple things that, like friendly hands, procure to us a manifold sustenance, filling our hearts with food and gladness? This is true piety and no superstition, exceedingly tender towards God, as it is brave and healthy in the soul where it springs. Mayhap when we, the latest seed of time, come to recognise a divinity in the cotton mill and the steam engine (though it were only, as Mr. Ruskin says, the lesser Pthah, or deity of mechanical fire), our trouble of scepticism will begin to have an end. But George Eliot's Mother Earth was a local divinity, not the mere name of a universal power; she was the goddess at whose knees she had grown up, a Midland goddess, with green raiment mildly beautiful when the sun shone down upon it, and a garland of cornflowers mixed with the apple-blossom. Vine leaves, and the shouting at the winepress in Southern lands could never charm George Eliot's fancy like the chant of "Harvest home!" rising and sinking in the distance whilst the last load of barley was winding its way towards the yard gate of the Hall Farm, and the low westering sun shone right on the shoulders of the old Binton Hills, turning the unconscious sheep into bright spots of light; shone on the windows of Adam Bede's cottage, too, and set them aflame with a glory beyond that of amber or amethyst. That was enough to make her feel that she was in a great temple, and that the distant chant was a sacred song. In a later book she says, exquisitely: "We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it—if it were not the earth

where the same flowers came up again every spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lispering to ourselves on the grass, the same hips and haws on the autumn hedgerows, the same redbreasts that we used to call 'God's birds,' because they did no harm to the precious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known, and loved because it is known? The wood I walk in on this mild May-day, with the young yellow-brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white star-flowers and the blue-eyed speedwell and the ground ivy at my feet—what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid broad-petalled blossoms could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home scene? These familiar flowers, these well-remembered bird-notes, this sky, with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields, each with a sort of personality given to it by the capricious hedgerows—such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle, inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them."

And so Maggie Tulliver, when she read about Christiana passing "the river over which there is no bridge," always saw the Floss between the green pastures by the Great Ash.

Therefore George Eliot has not painted the infinite horizons of deep blue sky that are seen from Alpine summits, nor the wild waters that lay so far off when she was a child, nor hardly that "Midland Sea, moaning with memories," that she came to know on its Italian and Spanish coasts when she had travelled some way on in life. No object in nature "haunted her like a passion," unless it had been a part of the dead years that still lived in her and transformed her perception into love. Such is not the idyllic tone to which Theocritus and the "Pastor Fido" have accustomed our ear. It does not melt into mere animal joyousness nor vibrate with panic terror; it is too human to be quite rustic. The bovine gravity whereat we have laughed so often with George Eliot would surely ripple over a little more into smiling could it feel so delicately as this. But even a Sicilian peasant—

unless he were some god turned shepherd for the nonce—would smile towards the sun and the olive-clad slopes of Etna with eyes less intelligent than the affectionate melancholy gaze of George Eliot across her Loamshire fields.

For she never can forget the vast world and the fateful issues of life; upon the narrow scene of Hayslope village a pitiful tale may be enacted that will leave long memories of terror in the country-side. Her border of rustic beauty is embroidered on the pages of an epic song, wherein the gods descend to battle against man as well as for him, and the unseen powers make love "that endures for a breath," the mighty instrument of measureless ruin. But apart from the sense of sorrow, which is, however, the persistent undertone that deepens all her music, one can hardly imagine George Eliot likening herself to Theocritus, or accepting the somewhat superficial praise that her stories were idyllic. She would rather be Teniers than Theocritus. She takes pleasure in many a Dutch painting which lofty-minded people despise; she finds a source of delicious sympathy (and a style kindred to her own) in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence, which has been the lot of so many among her fellow-mortals.

I turn (she says in a well-known passage), without shrinking, from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sibyls, and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her flower-pot or eating her solitary dinner, while the noonday light, softened perhaps by a screen of leaves, falls on her mob-cap, and just touches the rim of her spinning-wheel and her stone jug, and all those cheap common things which are the precious necessities of life to her.

Here again we have come upon that secret of deep human sympathy which raises George Eliot from the crowd of miniature-painters, that love prettiness or pettiness, to the epic height. She would not blind herself to the vision of the ideal—at least she thinks so—any more than the divinest poet.

Paint us (she says) an angel, if you can, with a floating violet robe and a face paled by the celestial light; paint us yet oftener a Madonna turning her mild face upward and opening her arms to welcome the Divine glory. But let us always have men ready to give

the loving pains of a life to the faithful representation of commonplace things—men who see beauty in them and delight in showing how the light of heaven falls upon them. There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities; I want a great deal of those feelings for my everyday fellow-men, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude, whose faces I know, whose hands I touch, for whom I have to make way with kindly courtesy.

This is very loving and lovable; it recalls many a humourous, gentle touch in her writings, some of the words we remember soonest when we think of George Eliot, or the scenes whereon we linger most willingly. But how remote from the Greek or Latin idyll! To "Hermann and Dorothea" such feelings are much more akin. George Eliot, we do not doubt, often murmured to herself some saying like the good pastor's:

Ich

Tadle nicht gern was immer die gute Mutter Natur gab.

For neither could she bring herself to despise a gift, however slight and vulgar-looking, that came from the hand of Nature.

But can there be a quality more requisite or more helpful in searching the mysteries of man's heart than this rare humour that, whilst it views all things, great and small, in their relation to the infinitely Perfect, as if it were faith, yet bears with their limits and their feebleness as if it were charity? Here are the finest elements of our nature combined spontaneously—wide-glancing intelligence softened by love until it learns to be tolerant, love made more tender by prevision of impending loss. George Eliot desires, if that may be, to taste no delight which shall leave her unfaithful to the past. She has a more trusting belief in Nature than in self-confident, aspiring, much-devising man. Irreproachable perfection she would wish to see spread far above, like the bright distant heavens; but she does not feel herself at one with it. Her affection dwells in past years, and is gentle towards everything that is old and homely, or that has missed the mark by mere lumpish stolidity, not by clever malice. She is not so resolute in reforming away the ills of life as those

fierce Radicals who seem to have derived their name from disobeying the Lord of the Harvest, manfully rooting up the tares and the wheat whilst both are green and somewhat indistinguishable. Custom demanded her reverence, as it had won her earliest love.

And the same temper which strengthened her clinging to all natural growths in spite of their irregularities—their departure from the type beheld in vision by Linnæus or Owen—stirred up in her a half-comic jealous feeling towards the fine speculations that create a dogmatist of peremptory sentences on paper and a Jacobin with unyielding formulas in the world of action. Perhaps to her keen eye it did not appear that the American cheapness, as of brittle, because hastily forged, metal, that marks our modern advantages, is a sure proof of their lasting worth. Large-hearted as she was, how could she help crying out against the scientific wire-fences wherein we are all going to be penned by the culture of the day! What wonder if she was given to looking back wistfully on the hedgerows that wasted the land, indeed, with their straggling beauty, but shrouded the grassy borders of the pastures with catkined hazels, and tossed their long blackberry branches on the cornfields! Hers, she amusingly said, was not a well-regulated mind; it had drowsy moments “when imagination did a little Toryism by the sly, revelling in regret that dear old brown, crumbling, picturesque inefficiency was everywhere giving place to spick-and-span, new-painted, new-varnished efficiency which will yield endless diagrams, plans, elevations, and sections, but, alas! no picture.” Thus did she take a quaintly malicious pleasure in setting the Past against the reforming Present, and at all times find food for innocent laughter.

George Eliot, I have often thought, is the aptest illustration of Thackeray’s true saying, that “Humour is wit tempered by love.” For, indeed, it is a quality which comes of the “one touch of Nature” that “makes the whole world kin,” and that bids us in a friendly voice remember we somehow share in the imperfections we are so brilliantly mocking. Some have told us that humour perceives “the soul of good in things evil.” We had rather say that it mingles with the mood of irony some

spice or condiment of humble patience, which is a belief in the pardonableness of faulty man. Take away the capacity for good in George Eliot's peasant-folk, or in the large mind that is considering their way of life, and you will have slain the spirit of humour in her, leaving only a contemptuous thin-lipped scorn in its stead. And you will have set her down from the company of Cervantes and Shakespeare, to which she is entitled by this gift most of all.

Certainly she has nothing that astonished the world more than her abundant humour. The story of Parisian civilisation and Madame de Sévigné notwithstanding, it was held, at least in England, that a woman could hardly see the point of a jest, and did not relish one. Humour, like the theory of ideas, was the *differentia* or distinctive mark of man; or, as George Eliot calls him somewhere, "the male human being." A humourous person was very likely coarse—Smollett and Fielding, indeed, gave ordinary minds some foundation for thinking so; while scholars could, among themselves, illustrate the same tendency from mighty-mouthed Aristophanes and rude old Plautus. There may be still some readers, neither finical nor lackadaisical, who think that George Eliot's humour does occasionally border on the gross; and it is, once in a way, more massive than delicate. But these are spots on the sun. George Eliot is not only a great humourist, in spite of her sex, but it seems clear that she is the greatest—always excepting Carlyle—in modern literature.

If Thackeray's feeling had equalled his brilliancy, he might have greatly fulfilled his own definition, and contested the palm with her. Dickens is prolific in monsters and caricatures, odd fancies and impossible comicalities, and is a delightful showman of dreams and shadows; but much as we are in debt to him for laughable situations, we find him neither grave enough in his cast of features, nor wise enough in his manner of thinking, to be perfectly humourous. The fun of his earlier books is too noisy and stage-like; the jesting which he exchanged for simple fun, latterly, is too strained. He can never mean a good thing without wrinkling his face all over,

like an ill-trained clown in the circus. And he has not often discerned the real incongruities that seem to lie in the very nature of things when Reason views them. In this respect Rabelais, Swift, Sterne, and Jean Paul may have overtopped all rivals. But George Eliot is quite worthy to be named with them for her keen sense of the essential comedy that clings to the finite and the individual. It may be said, indeed, that she has inherited the humour of the first three, with only the most distant touch of their grossness, and as much of Jean Paul's kindliness as might consist with renouncing his faith in Christianity.

Her humour like the melancholy of which it is sometimes the parent and sometimes the offspring, is compounded of many simples, and has the most varied applications. The humourist in grain goes counter to the world's established form; he is sad at a wedding breakfast and makes a pun at a funeral. He cannot help fancying that whatever the respectable in society take to be quite square is always a little lop-sided and out of shape. He has a perverse vision of fine films connecting the sacred with the profane, and the venerable with the ridiculous, which no one else would have seen had he refrained from flashing his ray of sunshine on their gossamer. There is in him some lack of the perfect homage to imperfect men which is secured by a good dulness, though he may still be more flexible than the average, and not less obedient. Humour, like every species of originality, carries with it a peril for the owner, and is liable to explode upon him as well as his friends. But George Eliot, being many things besides a humourist, has not driven in her liking for incongruities over the precipice, though she comes to its very brink. When Mr. Herbert Spencer bids her look through the telescope he shares with Mr. Darwin, and behold in prospect the Survival of the Fittest—modesty will not allow us to presume that the day is already here—she draws back in alarm, and asks what is to be the fate of all the lovable oddities whom she remembers down in Loamshire and still wears in her heart. It does not soothe her to be told that unless they perish the world

cannot be perfect. She objects to perfection at such a price. Never will she believe in the undertaker's heaven, where all faces are composed to a decent solemnity; nor in Coleridge's, where Charles Lamb would be admitted only on condition of developing his imperfect sympathies into perfect dulness, and could surely not revere a man whom he had once playfully taken by the nose, as there is an unfounded though plausible legend that he did to Wordsworth.

Poor George Eliot! she could not resist the suspicion that our modern progress, if not checked in time, might land us, like Mr. Brooke's studies, anywhere! When doing good to one's neighbour had grown into as complete an instinct as keeping one's balance; when, the struggle for existence having come to an end by the bringing in of perfection, there was nothing in the world to help or hinder, and things had reached that state of democratic equality and unvarying evenness which we ominously call a "dead level"; what, she said to herself, would be the motive to keep on living a moment longer? Shudderingly she cries out:

"Tis a poor climax to my weaker thought,
That general middlingness.

And in this mood she strikes upon her deep-voiced organ such a dismal chord as Mr. Stuart Mill brought out, to every one's surprise, on his somewhat piercing scrannel-pipe, a few years ago. He called up, as we remember, a vision of all the glory that should be when the reign of benevolence and Atheism had wrought the universe to the pattern designed by his flinty-hearted father. And he asked himself, Shall I be happy then? An irresistible foreboding whispered No; and the poor enthusiast of benevolence sank into the waters of despair. Henceforth he would forgo happiness; he would be content with advancing his theories. And has not Mr. Matthew Arnold apologised for his own high spirits on the plea that they cannot last? "You know," he says, in a deprecating tone, "we shall soon be all yawning in one another's faces." Man used to be defined, by a supposed inseparable peculiarity of his, as "a laughing animal,"

But M. Comte and Mr. Spencer will ere long have changed all that. Even smiling may come to be looked upon as prehistoric—at all events when it is directed against the sacred doctrines of Positivism.

However, except in this unaccountable shying at the luminous shadows of a future she devoutly—we cannot say prays for, but—hopes in, George Eliot has a steed that answers the rein well, and his curvetings and demi-volts serve to show off her unrivalled skill in the *manège*. How pleasant to stand by and watch them! Impossible to read the opening pages of “Janet’s Repentance” without a touch of compassion for the unconscious denizens of Milby, who little thought that their accurate knowledge, fine satire, and genial sense of their own importance, and of the manifest pettiness of any world outside their borders, were to make inextinguishable laughter for all England a hundred years hence, all because one quiet-looking person (whose religious gravity may have been the only thing to remark about her) was just within earshot, and took note of them! But Milby may find comfort in the reflection that St. Ogg’s is not a whit less ridiculous, though somewhat less interesting; while Treby Magna has only the privilege of demonstrating that its political wisdom was worthy to match the religious uprising against Mr. Tryan at Milby, and the moral protest of St. Ogg’s against Maggie Tulliver.

If drawings in the manner of Hogarth, or groupings like the well-known School of Athens, were in vogue—and it is a pity they are not—one might fancy a great tableau of the humours of George Eliot set over against a great tableau of the humours of Charles Dickens, say at Burlington House. The contrast would be striking, and the effect upon the average spectator remarkable. What an astonishingly rich, animated, multitudinous picture; what comic situations, queer figures, grotesque, overdrawn, impossible attitudes; what visions of a good-humoured nightmare and Carnival of Goblins the canvas of Dickens would exhibit! How like a laughable dream, how unlike the sights of every day, even amid the picturesque horrors of unfashionable London! George Eliot’s drawing would appear by comparison sober and prosaic; her faces not

queer and distorted, but of a simple human ugliness; her situations common and not often theatrical; the lines not lengthened into caricature, nor twisted to the impossible grotesque, but seriously, nay, anxiously, correct. We should not be able to keep from laughing with Dickens and at him; and our laughter would easily melt into sentimental, nay, into genuine pity, when he chose to demand it. George Eliot would have, indeed, her groups of Laughters and Laughables, and she would excite our better feelings not less than Dickens; but the humour would never be sentimental: whilst we were amused we should begin to reflect as well.

Mr. Casaubon, for instance, whose *Key to all Mythologies* has been mislaid in a hundred notebooks, his features making known to us that not even immortal fame in this world, and a happy eternity in the next, are a soothing balm for the poisonous criticism of Carp (Carp, whom he has been led to address as "*nullo ævo peritulum*") would surely be more humorous, because more true to nature and more tragic, than half of Dickens's droll fancies. And how penetrating would be the humour of Rufus Lyon's surroundings and doctrines!—all the more so because he is a lovable, upright old man, with deep and earnest thoughts and a brave spirit. Note, again, the subtle touch in describing Mrs. Poyser: she is pale and in delicate health—how sharp an edge does that give to her sarcasm whilst heightening our conviction that she is drawn from the life! And a wide canvas that should take in the great square of the Mercato at Florence for a foreground, having in perspective the dingy streets of Milby and Middlemarch, where the sky itself seems only a strip of soot-begrimed calico, would offer us, indeed, a mixed and motley company, but nothing incredible, or the product of an unrestrained fancy.

It is commonly expected that the humorous will not be true, will be somewhat far-fetched and improbable; for humour is an irresistible solvent, a token that we have escaped from the control of the men and the opinions which we hold up to its gentle or biting scorn. Whence no institutions on their trial can bear to be

ridiculed (if they have any weak points), and laughter is the beginning of revolt or reformation. But George Eliot, intent upon bringing into clear sunshine the limitations of English character, the inadequacy of English beliefs, would defeat her purpose by airy, unsubstantial caricature; when she makes a man laughable she must demonstrate that he is so, not by any accidental mishap, or seen through stage spectacles, but in the very eyes of Truth and Love. To laugh with George Eliot is to decide against human folly by appealing to the ideal of human or divine perfection. For there is a true laughter and a false. Peasants laugh at refinement, citizens laugh at genius or humility, courtiers laugh at honesty, and the world laughs at religion. It is only the philosopher and the saint that laugh at essential unreason; and their laughter is seasoned with knowledge and compassion, and perhaps the hope of better things—or, at least, the vision of their possibility. George Eliot construed her experience in the light of an immense theory; she felt for mankind (the word is not too large) as one that desired no happiness which all might not share.

She was never made to be a satirist, bounding her notions of good and evil by the conception of civilised and transient social forms. Nor would her cast of thought encourage the beautiful unrealities, the slight and morning dreams, the easy forgiveness of a Christian poet whose tone, like that of Charles Dickens, vibrates to love rather than to fear. Her sympathy for man is not the "child of golden hope," but of deep and tender pity. The grave will right many wrongs, the future will bring in a peaceful better time—what more can science or its religion promise? Not that God will wipe away the tears from every eye; for its heaven is only the vision of the ideal, and never can be a fact. But if our grief has an end with ourselves in the dust, why, she seems to ask, be so troubled? If there is good in store for the race, why not strive towards accomplishing it? How laughable our regard for self! how piteous, too! How delightfully comic the contrast between our submission to social statutes and our genuine likings and schemings to have our own way! How unaffected, loving, helpful

we might be, did the spirit of the Christian teaching rule us! How foolish and unhappy we shall remain until we learn those principles of true knowledge, or science, which make it clear that, however the Christian legends may be exploded as mythical, the sayings of Christ, the self-sacrifice of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the compassion of Christ, must enter as elements into any theory of religion that is to govern the future! Such as these appear to have been the principles of her philosophy at its best.

Therefore the creative genius, the keen eye and loving heart for all things natural, the unselfish tolerance, the grave and serious tone, the spirit of humour subdued by knowledge, the beseeching earnestness, the unwearying sympathy, the ever-growing sadness, that have made George Eliot a familiar great name amongst us, are combined into their peculiar form, and receive a distinct energy from the religion that she preached and, in some degree, practised. It is a religion that many other leading spirits profess to hold; but none have given expression to its aspirations in shapes so clear and beautiful, nor can we trace its development from ancient creeds, and the mutual relation of old and new, with such breadth, humour and liveliness as in the pages she has recited out of her own history and the history of her own age. No criticism of her characters can be worth attempting unless we take her purpose into account; but when we have looked upon Dinah Morris, Adam Bede, Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Daniel Deronda, through the eyes of the great woman that has drawn such significant personages for us, we shall have gained an insight into this new religion that has so remarkable a literature, and that aims at the sceptre of social sovereignty. If it survives, it will be in the form that George Eliot has given it. And the question deserves our study, how long that form can last. Or shall we not have to say of it, as of her, not so many days hence?—

Quel foco è morto, e'l copre un picciol marmo

II

JOHN INGLESANT¹

A SIGN of the times, though nowise encouraging to watchers from Lookout Mountain, to the men that forecast our religious tempests and seasons of halcyon peace, has lately been the flight inshore, steady, swift, and ever more frequent, of stormy petrels, as we may call them, winging their way from the broad dim seas of romance. That always unquiet element now holds within itself (and the gravest have begun to perceive it) all manner of beliefs, aspirations, and tendencies, the deepest thoughts and suspicions that our age is brooding over. And it is sending landward, we say, storm-signals in the shape of allegories fraught with mystic meaning, with moralities and theories, systems of reason, schemes of religion, under the garb, for the most part, of very strange words. The careless reader now scents a significance, something to call typical or inspired, in his lightest literature. Allegories are grown into a stock department at Mudie's. Nay, most noteworthy of all, the shameless stories that public opinion would otherwise condemn have found favour in the eyes of some, as though they might be Religion in masquerade and Truth intoxicated. So astonishing is the age we live in!

One of the latest storm-birds arrived is a strange creature, of mixed and most varied plumage, driven on our shores from far-off seas of Platonism, Mysticism, Inward Lights and Divine Silences—the perilous waters that our ancestors were sailing over two hundred years

¹ "John Inglesant: a Romance." By J. H. Shorthouse. New Edition. Macmillan & Co. 1881.

ago, but by this generation seldom visited. A suggestive and peculiar book is "John Inglesant," readable by all the world, but subtle in drift, full of changing colours, abstruse, romantic and melancholy. Seen in one light, it shines with the beauty of holiness; in another, it has the leaden hue of a seventeenth-century pamphlet against Popery and Jesuitism. Its doctrines are not easy to reconcile with any creed; its form is unusual, its matter perplexed. A severe critic might call "John Inglesant" a hybrid, for it combines romance with metaphysics and false with true in proportions out of the common. Yet its author, we imagine, is a thoughtful, benevolent spirit, eager to see things as they are, and in temper candid. How comes he to assail the Roman Church with bankrupt histories? He would seem to challenge criticism at our hands. Nor will it surprise him, surely, if the most lenient verdict on our side should deal with "John Inglesant" as the Persian soldier was dealt with who, for saving the King at the cost of his dignity, was first crowned, then beaten with rods. For if in any wise he has defended truth, yet has he not trailed its imperial purple in the dust?

This anomalous but beautiful work comes to us from a Platonising mystic, who aims at revealing his thought in a romance, which is to serve as an ὄχημα, or vehicle for his philosophy, like the chariots in the "Phædrus," which bore along gods and demons in procession through the sky. But whoever desires to tell a story must have a story to tell. Not even the austere thinker, if he turn novelist, can escape that law. He needs as interesting a fable as if he understood nought of entities, quiddities, ambiguous middles, categorical imperatives, and all their tribe. He must be secret, surprising, powerful, and a skilled hand at catastrophe. Our author in the preface prays us to hold him excused. From him we are to look neither for sparkling dialogue, picturesque effect, nor unguessable plot. But there is cunning in all this: he has no mind to paint his delicate monsters on the outside of the show. A feast of good things and, to add a fresh piquancy, no bill of fare—such is "John Inglesant." Being opened, it proves as tragical, secret, surprising, as rich in quality as it well can, without

plunging us into an atmosphere of carbonic acid or mysteries of the Old Bailey, or leading us counter on a false trail and a double scent.

Yes, it abounds in adventure, love, and pageantry ; it is pathetic, and has here and there a touch of quiet humour. Not the Platonic irony, indeed ; its writer, though his mood is sometimes sceptical to a high degree, lacks the airy smiling imagination that has made of some sceptics the best of company. He looks at you gravely, always ; but there may be detected the faint echo of a laugh in his turns of speech. For scene-painting, footlights, and a pleasant antique sort of dancing, accompanied by fine sweet music, chiefly of the violin and other stringed instruments, the book makes due provision. Its personages are many, but not a crowd ; their entrances and exits have the grace that marks their time—the century of Vandyck and Charles I. Their English is clear, courtly, not pedantic, so seldom anticipating that which we now use (though not quite unmixed, and never, we think, free from modern accent) that critics have likened it to a transcript from Clarendon. Too easy a sentence ! These new antiques succeed best in the twilight ; they will not bear a noonday comparison with Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, or Clarendon himself. But enough : whatever praise of this kind the work merits, may it not be read on the last page but one of the *Spectator* ? To the story, therefore, without more delay ; and after that, the moral !

We are in the palmy days of Church and King, when pulpits were resounding with passive obedience and Puritan saints were leaguering together to pull down both. A brief overture tells us how Thomas Cromwell drove out the monks from Westacre Priory, a delightful old house on the edge of the Wiltshire Downs, putting in their stead the Flemish race of Inglesant, to keep that part for the Crown against the Pope, a task which they loyally undertook. The head of the house has now two sons, Eustace and John, twins, marvellously resembling one another. But Eustace, the heir, is bred among the royal pages at Whitehall ; John, a dreamy, silent boy, has grown up in the country under grave masters, from

whom he has learnt his Greek verbs, taking them in with a deep infusion of Platonism.

There are three elements in Plato, says the book: the Socratic, or negative, argument, that simply overthrows received opinion; the pseudo-scientific, to which Plato was liable from the condition of knowledge in his day; and the transcendental reason, which, leaving alike the scepticism of the negative argument and the fictions of old science, flies into the pure ether of the heavenly life. John was to be conversant with every one of these, but most of all with the direct experience whereby the Infinite and the Divine makes itself known to the spirit. And he has heard wonders, too, of that Rosicrucian idea which afterwards became the grandmother to Freemasonry, Illuminism, Mesmerism, and other mysteries and mumblings.

Deep reverence for "the pure and apostolic branch of the Church established in these realms," and for its anointed head, he could not fail to inherit. But when, in his boy's way, he put questions that no one could answer, he naturally fell back on his own musings, as he rambled over the downs, fishing, meditating, dreaming, and praying. Here were the ingredients of a witches' cauldron! How could any of them be wanting in the age of the Mystics, the Carolinian Divines, the Cavaliers? Another ingredient, however, was yet to be thrown in. The Inglesants had ever stood by the throne, and as near to it as they could get. They were pious people; but the complexion of their faith was determined by Act of Parliament, and, as the physician prescribed, so did its colour vary. Had they been free to obey the will of Heaven, they would have turned back to the Church of their fathers. They sighed after peace. But, while none were readier to follow their own Church in the ways of reconciliation, they would not budge an inch without her. All they dared was to hope much, and lend a willing hand to the efforts then constantly making for union of old and new. The number of conscientious High Churchmen was not inconsiderable; that of waiters on Providence had ever been large.

Thus, in spite of Platonist and Puritan, it was the

hour between light and dark when bats fly abroad. The dusk of Religion, the reign of Cant, the futile efforts of men to halt between God and Baal, did not call out saints or apostles ; but every creature of uncertain species that crept more than it flew, and was endowed with sharp teeth and leathern pinions, might now be industriously on the wing. Besides the four primal elements of society, there is a fifth which is not intellect, but its corruption. To this by no means pleasant medium, which we may call intrigue, our book (so far as we can construe it) assigns a corresponding species of living creature, famous enough, though not easy to define or secure. The Catholic Church is said to have reared it with the greatest success ; but Protestants, it would appear, know most of its nature and history. Need we say that the species indicated are the Jesuits? Our author means to speak much good and not a little evil of them. He will not call them hypocrites indeed, giving them the benefit of a charity which we fear they must decline. For if his account of their belief and their actions be true on the whole (as we are sure that it is, on the whole, quite false), then *we* must take leave to call them hypocrites ; and so, we make certain, will our readers. We had rather condemn the Society of Jesus with Pascal than absolve it with "John Inglesant." Why we must so vitally differ from the book, not only where it blames, but even where it refrains from blaming, the sons of St. Ignatius, we hope to explain as we proceed.

To these Jesuits, therefore, the Inglesants and their like afforded infinite pasture. The Jesuits lived with them, directed their consciences, ruled their households, taught them dancing and the use of the rapier, and in all things held them with a velvet glove that concealed an iron hand. For every Jesuit was an incarnation of the wicked Italian proverb, *Lingua sciolta, pensieri stretti* ; the art of speaking as he pleased and meaning what he chose he had brought to perfection. He was at this time hoping to conquer England for the Holy See. But the weapons of his warfare would have astonished St. Paul, for they were neither miracles nor virtues, but tongue-fence and word-craft, accomplishments that dazzled, carnal wisdom

that made the next world a stepping-stone to this, natural goodness misapplied in the pursuit of power and greatness. To sum up: the readers of "John Inglesant" are invited to believe that the Jesuit of Charles I.'s day was in genius an Admirable Crichton, in morals a Machiavelli, in fertility of resources—himself, the nonpareil of villains. Will our author deprecate so harsh a construction? Let us turn to the story.

When Jesuits abounded everywhere except in prison, and their machinations overspread the land, Westacre Priory could not escape them. The most fascinating and powerful of them all came down to Wiltshire when John was learning to construe the "Phædo" and the "Apologia Socratis." But Father St. Clare was no Platonist. He much preferred Aristotle, but read him askint, from the scholastic angle of vision, construing the "Ethics" as if Machiavelli had helped Duns Scotus to write them. The "Exercises" of St. Ignatius, Morals of the Stagyrte, and Politics of the Florentine, he resolved, with the simplicity that marks a great mind, into one comprehensive maxim—we know it already—"The end justifies the means." Thus did he formulate the Grand Arcanum of the Society, and lay bare the mystical significance of their copybook inscription, A.M.D.G. Upon no other principle can his life be interpreted. The world, whatever "John Inglesant" may urge to the contrary, will take him for a model of "Jesuitism"; and what is "Jesuitism" but the expediency of evil raised to a dogma of the Faith?

Father Hall (to vary his name by an *alias*, as he did himself) teaches his young pupil that the difference between the Roman and the English Church is unimportant and slight; that he must not become a Catholic, because his father does not wish it; that the most practical lesson of life is to regard all men as alike—to recognise that creeds and opinions are the mere results of chance and temperament; that no party (meaning, so far as we can tell, no Church) is, on the whole, better than its rival; that the largest of the creeds can but inadequately shadow forth an aspect of the 'Truth, and that all we can demand of ourselves is loyally to serve the party we have chosen. Now, this teaching (which we do not combat here) may sound

reasonable in Protestant circles; it has been widely accepted, perhaps, in the Church of England, and has soothed an aching conscience when perplexed by doubts it could not resolve. But to Catholics we shall seem to be uttering a truism when we say that no priest—no Jesuit—could have held or taught it without falling into hypocrisy and scepticism.

That St. Clare's unbelief was an exceedingly humane instinct, which forbade him to be cruel or cynical, just as it forbade him to dogmatise, cannot alter these things. He has some noble qualities. Though despising party distinctions, and holding that Jansenist and Jesuit, Papist and Puritan are all one, he feels the deepest love and tenderness towards mankind; like a modern preacher, he exclaims that nothing but the infinite pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life. A gentle villain, and only half a Jesuit! But still he justifies the means by the end. Thus he trains Inglesant to be a student of human nature—keen, courageous, imperturbable. He is the sole master of the growing lad, and gains boundless influence over him. Yet their characters remain distinct. John is an enthusiast; in a certain sense he is Plato come again. His soul is akin to the soul of the Athenian seer and poet. For the types of humanity never die; from age to age the world is like itself; newest things are ever the most ancient. It has been said that were Plato to return from the shades there are three Oxford men living he might take for his ideal Socrates.¹ Yet they differ as much as individuals may—the subtle theologian from the perfect art-critic, and both from the master of modern thought at Balliol. And so, despite the opposed colours of their time, Inglesant and Plato were the same spirit.

But with visions that unfit the head for device, the hands for action, St. Clare, however well he might comprehend them, felt no sympathy. He had renounced the world only to rule it. He watched the youth narrowly. John kept on dreaming his dream of immediate communion with the Highest. He did not know that many others were dreaming like him, or that George Fox would by-and-by stitch for himself the suit of leather wherein he

¹ Written in 1882.

was to walk independent of folly and fashion, casting aside the forms of the Reformers as they had cast aside the forms of the Catholic Church. Not from the Quaker prophet did he learn that all the mystics were not dead, but from a volume which he came upon of the school of St. Teresa, and which he read through repeatedly with a joyful heart. It spoke, he thought, like his Greek master, of the Inward Light, of acquiescence in the will of the Supreme and the bliss of renunciation. But why did it stoop from sublime heights to speak also of the priest, the director? Was not this to quench the Spirit in a muddy pool, to trouble the Eternal Silence with a tumult of voices? He sought out his early teachers, and prayed them to pull this tangle straight; but one inveighed with Synesius against the fanaticism of Christian Alexandria; another talked of ceremonies and the Laudian ritual. The best of them, a gentle old Anglican, but no Laudian, put him in mind of what he had learned long ago, that we live in the Unseen Presence and that all things else pass away. St. Clare listened, smiled, said nothing, and took John, one fine morning, up to London.

This was the turning-point in his career. For many years he was to be an instrument ready to his master's hands, an agent at once powerful and unsuspected of the Jesuits in their designs upon England. St. Clare lived in close intimacy with Charles and his Queen; he had scouts everywhere; he could himself dare all things, going in disguise or appearing openly as his plans required. He would reconcile nobody except under compulsion to his Church; for he dreamt of enacting the part of Cardinal Pole, and one day absolving the nation. Now he introduced John into the Queen's household, making him an honourable, because an innocent, spy.

The young man became a courtier, but did not cease to be a saint. He was graceful, easy, winning, considerate—a chivalrous, loyal gentleman; but the malady that was born with him hung about him still; enthusiasm went clad in velvet and Valenciennes lace, not a whit less fervent than had it been Fox in his suit of leather. The Inward Light drew him towards the Church in whose atmosphere he was now living; and he would have followed it, but contrary

influences wrought on a sensitive mind, so quick to feel the most remote attractions, so anxious to account for them, that it was ever tremulous and undecided. "We call ourselves free agents," says the author: "was this slight, delicate boy a free agent, with a mind and spirit so susceptible that the least breath affected them; around whom the throng of national contentions was about to close; on whom the intrigue of the great religious party was about to seize, involving him in a whirlpool of party strife and religious rancour?"

At all events, John was to undergo a complicated experience. On the one hand, he learned at Little Gidding, the noted monastic household of Nicholas Ferrars, that grace and consolation may seem to flow from the Communion-table of the Church of England as it flows, says our book, from the gorgeous altars of Rome. For the house in Northamptonshire, though monastic, was not Catholic. On the other hand, St. Clare had inculcated by every method that forms and ordinances, though helpful, were unequal to the soul's desire. "If the Blessed Sacrament is amongst them," Nicholas Ferrars asks, "what more can Christians seek?" Had Inglesant been a High Churchman, we might smile at his simplicity, and answer that Augustine wrote against the Anglicans of the fourth century—the Donatists—expressly to convince them that sacraments and schism will never make a Church. But Inglesant was no more an Anglican of Laud's school than his biographer is of Pusey's or Keble's. In the eyes of both all forms are valid, when we can believe in them. Meanwhile our author makes a singular confession. "The strongest of all the motives that lead to Rome is," he declares, "the craving after the Sacrifice of the Mass." Words that unveil the deeps of human nature; for the Mass involves the Church and the whole sacramental system; and what becomes, then, of our ethereal Platonism which clings to no one symbol more than another?

But Inglesant, though devout and a Platonist, was human too. Among the sisterhood at Little Gidding, there was one whose face troubled him where she knelt in contemplation; and, when his eyes wandered, his affections

followed them. He fell in love. The author, gravely admitting that even the quest of the ideal has sometimes taken this way, sketches Mary Collet in the subdued yet pleasant tints of which he holds the secret. Mary had thought of vowing herself to the single state; but her bishop was a wise man—he exhorted her to the free obedience that he knew must end some day. Secluded in Northamptonshire, she has unwittingly captivated the feelings, not only of the courtier from Whitehall, but of a wild Puritan fanatic, who protests with many compunctious visitings that all things are vanity except Mary Collet. He is well drawn: one must laugh at him and pity him in a breath. He touches even the compassion of his rival. Inglesant, in a fine chivalrous way, pleads for him with Mary in the nuns' parlour. We look on at the courtship of Miles Standish over again. But the Puritan has small chance of winning. Our pensive nun asks by expressive change of countenance the question a New England maiden might whisper demurely, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" We can fancy his eloquence in reply, and a pretty scene it is: the recluse in sable lawn with downcast eyes, listening to her Vandyck cavalier, and half turning from him, as if he and she were figures in a legend of Renunciation and Love. But neither he nor the Puritan made a conquest of her. It was not a time, she said, to spend their days like lovers in a play: he must follow the King, and she her calling. She could return his affection even while she went into her convent again. And so John rode back to Whitehall.

By this time his drawing towards Rome had grown fainter. For St. Clare was still resolved that his agent should lose neither influence nor position by renouncing the Church of England. Among the Queen's servants he was likely to be tempted; and, by means that are left in the dark, Inglesant was brought near King Charles and made Esquire of the Body. Such is the dexterity of a Jesuit in romance! Though he seem to have no faith, he can remove mountains as well as those that have. His next was a more debatable step. It is good to take away the occasion of sin, but best to pluck it up by the roots. Inglesant had only one fault: he was an

exalté, as the French would call him now. Did he not require a strong counter-irritant—for example, a dose of unbelief carefully administered? The Jesuit had ere now impressed on him “a broad philosophical view of things”; but, being a Christian and a priest, he could not well enlarge on the beauties of Materialism. It must be attempted by another hand. Accordingly, he makes Inglesant known to Hobbes—as famous a writer then as Jeremy Taylor, and much more famous than Milton, but now, happily, dwindled to a shadow. From his book he was nicknamed “Leviathan,” understood to be an Atheist, and more feared than understood. He saw at once through the Jesuit’s cunning, and laughed—not refusing, however, to speak his mind about Rome. Inglesant’s notion that the Catholic Church was a unique society, realising the Ideal and manifesting the Divine, was, he told him, a delusion. Romanism meant the narrow conceptions of an ignorant priest, trivial details, the torture of habitual confession. Its system of impostures, grotesque superstitions, and unrelenting cruelty, made it fitter to be a dance of satyrs than the Church of Christ. But in no sense would he allow of the private spirit whereon Inglesant was for staying his belief. How if the spirit were a delusion too, resting on authorities and customs, but with no ground in experience? John, though far from convinced, could not answer him. He went away sad, more estranged from Catholic teaching, half inclined to doubt whether he was sure of anything but the objects of sense and touch.

By so drastic a remedy did the reverend Machiavelli, S.J., disperse the threatenings of conversion in his pupil. Our author narrates these wonders with a grave face. We feel that he is quite in earnest. There was a genius once that could read as a piece of deep divinity a meditation on a broomstick, and move no muscle. But that was Swift, and Mr. Shorthouse is very unlike Swift. He is absolutely serious. And because he is serious, Catholics will be apt to cry out with Cardinal Newman, “O Truth, how many lies are told in thy name!” Yet our storyteller is not the author of them; he has read such things before, and he frames his romance on the laws of

probability as laid down in the great Protestant Brazen Legend, which will more than match the least credible of Golden Legends he could retort upon Jacob a Voragine.

Inglesant was now in the main stream of politics. He watched all parties keenly. He looked on at the rise and fall of Strafford, wondering that the wind of mere clamour had sufficed to overthrow him and bring him to the block. Charles's guilt or cowardice draws upon him in the tale a fearful visitation—one of those touches from beyond the tomb that abound in the records of enthusiasm. Two nights after the execution, while Inglesant is in waiting outside the royal bedchamber, and the King, who cannot sleep, is hearing an attendant read to him, suddenly the guard challenges an unknown figure, which gives back haughtily the password "Christ," and strides through the palace. It is Strafford himself. He pulls aside the hangings that screen the entrance to Charles's apartment, glares upon his disloyal master, and vanishes. The Esquire alone has identified him, and a high-strung interview follows between Inglesant and the King, which confirms the truth of the apparition. It is a striking scene, told with genuine power.

In the next chapter civil war has broken out, and the King takes up his abode at Oxford, of which city this graceful sketch is given :

There has never, perhaps, existed so curious a spectacle as Oxford during the residence of the King. A city unique in itself became the resort of a Court under unique circumstances, and of an innumerable throng of people, of every rank, disposition, and taste. The ancient colleges and halls were thronged with ladies and courtiers; noblemen lodged in small attics over bakers' shops in the streets; soldiers were quartered in the college-gates and in the kitchens; yet, with all this confusion, there was maintained both something of a courtly pomp and something of a learned and religious society. The King (whose Court was at Christ Church) dined and supped in public, and walked in State in Christ Church Meadow, and Merton Gardens, and the Grove of Trinity, which the wits called Daphne. A Parliament sat from day to day; service was sung daily in all the chapels; books of learning and poetry were printed in the city; and the distinctions the colleges had to offer were conferred with pomp on the royal followers, as almost the only rewards the King had to bestow. Men of every opinion flocked to Oxford, and many foreigners came to

visit the King. There was in the country a large and highly intelligent body of men, who hovered between the two parties, and numbers of these were constantly in Oxford—Harrington the philosopher, the King's friend Hobbes, Lord Falkland, Lord Paget, the Lord Keeper, and many others. Mixed up with these grave and studious persons, gay courtiers and gayer ladies jostled old and severe divines, and crusty tutors used the sarcasms they had been wont to hurl at their pupils to reprove ladies whose conduct appeared to them at least far from decorous. Christmas interludes were enacted in Hall, and Shakespeare's plays performed by the King's players, assisted by amateur performers; and it would have been hard to say whether the play was performed before the curtain or behind it, or whether the actors quitted their parts when the performance was over, or then in fact resumed them. The groves and walks of the colleges were the resort of this gay and brilliant throng; the woods were vocal with song and music, and love and gallantry sported themselves along the pleasant river-banks. The poets and wits vied with each other in classic conceits and parodies, wherein the events of the day were portrayed and satirised. Wit, learning, and religion joined hand in hand, as in some grotesque and brilliant masque. The most admired poets and players and the deepest mathematicians became 'Romancists' and monks, and exhausted all their wit in furthering their divine mission; and finally, as the last scenes of this strange drama came on, fell fighting on some hardly contested grassy slope, and were buried on the spot, or in the next village churchyard, in the dress in which they had played Philaster, or the Court garb in which they wooed their mistress, or the doctor's gown in which they preached before the King, or read Greek in the schools.

With such unpretending skill does our author paint, upon the darkness of the past, that crowd of "ladies dead and lovely knights," with here and there figures of moral grandeur towering above them, that followed the King to battle and ruin. Foremost in all purities and courtesies was John Inglesant, fighting till he went down at Edgehill, winning the name of hero in the public mouth, and of more than hero with his friends at Little Gidding, or coming with art and delicacy to the rescue of ladies in distress, and taking to his heart the comrades that loved him for his inevitable kindness and gentle dealing; in all things approving himself loyal, devout, and brave. A beautiful character of a man! On the battlefield he meets his Puritan rival, receives from him one last greeting, and sorrowfully looks on at his death. He is sent by Father St. Clare up to London during Laud's imprisonment and

trial; to the fallen prelate he brings comfort, and, at no slight risk, attends him on the scaffold. Laud's execution is told with much feeling. By all Churchpeople it was accounted a martyrdom; and, says the author, wherever the news came, "it was added that Mr. John Inglesant, the King's servant, who had used every effort to save the Archbishop, was with him to the last."

John travels back to Oxford, and thence with the royal army to Naseby, where Royalism goes down before Cromwell. He had now seen his last of youth; nor was he to taste security or happiness for many years. His old master was shaping a mission for him on the King's behalf, such as no man of less heroic temper would have accepted. For Charles's sake he was to do that which must seem in a Churchman treason to his Church, in an Englishman betrayal of his country. The Jesuit bade him proceed to Ireland, where the Catholics were then treating with Lord Glamorgan almost on their own terms. It would be his duty to hasten the peace by persuading the confederate leaders that Charles was ready to abolish the Penal Laws and make a free passage for Irish troops into England. His papers bore the royal signature, but between him and St. Clare it was understood that the King would never own them. Charles was to reap the good fortune of the enterprise, Inglesant the evil.

He gladly consented. But all he foresaw came to pass. He reached Kilkenny, brought the treaty to an issue, and, making his way back into Chester disguised, was there taken. His adventures remind one of General George Monk and the siege of Nantwich. And now the crisis came upon him. Had Charles, or had he not, invited an army of Irish Papists to lay waste English homes? The Roundheads affirmed it as passionately as the Cavaliers denied it; without Inglesant's evidence no proof could be attained. He declared himself an agent of the Jesuits, who had forged the King's name. Charles at Oxford considered with St. Clare how he might shield his royal dignity and save Inglesant. But the casuist told the King that he must keep silence, and let his servant die on the scaffold, as he would have set him in the forefront of battle. The trial came on. Inglesant bore it heroically,

never flinching from his ignominious part, only once or twice by an involuntary flash of nobleness betraying that he was not the base thing he feigned. Milton, whose eyes were yet undimmed, caught the truth in a moment; the Commons felt sure that Charles had been his accomplice. If Inglesant were taken to the scaffold, might he not confess? So Cromwell argued; and the envoy and another were condemned to die at Charing Cross. This is how the ordeal ended:

The completest silence prevailed, broken only by a faint sobbing and whispering from the pitying crowd. Colonel Powell prayed for a quarter of an hour with an audible voice; then taking leave again of his friends, and directing the executioner when to strike, he knelt down to the block, and repeating the words, "Lord Jesus, receive me!" his head was smitten off with a blow. A long deep groan, followed by an intense silence, ran through the crowd. The officer who accompanied Inglesant looked at him with a peculiar expression; and, bowing in return, Inglesant passed through the window, and as he mounted the steps and his eyes came to the level of the interposing scaffold, and then rose higher than it, he saw the dense crowd of heads stretching far away on every hand, the house windows and roofs crowded on every side. He scarcely saw it before he almost lost the sight again. A wild motion that shook the crowd, a roar that filled the air and stunned the sense, a yell of indignation, contempt, hatred; hands shook and clutched at him, wild faces leaping up and staring at him, cries of "Throw him over!" "Give over the Jesuit to us!" "Throw over the Irish murderer!" made his senses reel for a moment, and his heart stop. . . . He faced the people, his hat in his hand, his pale face hard set, his teeth closed. Once or twice he tried to speak; it would have been as easy to drown the Atlantic's roar. As he stood apparently calm, this terrible ordeal had the worst effect upon him. Other men came to the scaffold prepared by holy thoughts, and the sacred, tender services of the Church of their Lord, feeling His hand indeed in theirs. But with him, how different! Denied the aid of prayer and sacrament, alone, overwhelmed with contempt and hatred, deafened with the fiendish noise which racked his excited, overwrought brain! He became hardened, fierce, contemptuous now. Hated, he hated again. He felt as though engaged in a mad duel with a despised yet too powerful foe. He turned at last to the officer, and said, his voice scarcely heard amid the increasing roar, "You see, sir, I cannot speak; do not let us delay any longer." The officer hesitated. A Parliamentary man advanced to Inglesant and offered him a paper. He told him in his ear that even now he would be set at liberty if he would sign the true evidence. The Parliament knew he was not guilty, and had no

wish to put him to death. Inglesant saw the natural rejoinder, but did not think it worth his while to make it. Only get this thing over, and escape from this maddening cry, to something quieter at any rate. He rejected the paper, and turning to the officer, said, with a motion towards the people of inexpressible disdain, "These good people are impatient for the final act, sir; do not let us keep them any longer." The officer still hesitated, and looked at the Parliament man, who shook his head and left the scaffold. The word of command was given: and the soldiers fell out of their ranks so as to mingle with the crowd. At once the officer took Inglesant's arm, and said hurriedly, "Come with me to the house, quick!" Not knowing what he did, Inglesant followed him. They had need to be quick. A yell, to which the noise preceding it was as nothing, a shower of stones, smashing every pane of glass, and falling in heaps at their feet, showed the fury of a maddened people, robbed of their prey. The officer looked at Inglesant and laughed. "I thought there would be a tumult," he said; "come with me." He led him, still almost unconscious, through the back entries and yards, the roar of the people still in their ears, till they reached a stair leading to the river, where there was a wherry and two or three guards. The officer stepped in after Inglesant, crying, "Pull away! the Tower!" then leaning back and looking at Inglesant, he said: "You stood that very well. I would rather mount the deadliest breach than face such a sight as that."

Though by no means equal to Walter Scott nor in workmanship quite thorough, here is a piece of historical painting that shows no little acquaintance with the spirit of the age. Now a different scene opens. The King was executed, and John found himself a prisoner in the Tower. His brother Eustace, wedded to a great lady and in possession of the family estates, had been ever a slack Royalist, and, by his efforts, John was at length set free. Eustace bore the welcome news to the Tower, and with it an invitation to his wife's seat in Wiltshire. That eccentric person had gathered round her pretenders of every colour—astrologers, physicians, Platonists, seekers after the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone. Rogues in grain, and wise men that lacked fortune, galled each other's kibe in her hospitable courts. Among them was an Italian known during his travels to Eustace, and his determined enemy. Resolved to drive him from Lady Cardiff's house, her husband wrote that he himself was now setting out thither. But she begged him to defer his coming, on grounds astrological, which she defined more

exactly by forwarding a horoscope full of threatening signs. This he laid before his brother. John, as becomes a pupil of St. Clare's, is learned in the stars. He convicts the scheme of more than one error, but allows it to be rightly drawn. Whereupon the brothers consult a magician at Lambeth.

It is the familiar scene : the circles traced on the floor, the rod of power, the faintly-glowing lamp, the brazier of lighted coals. Then the astrologer, in his *costume de rigueur*, enters, and again we read of the sable raiment, the consecrated crystal, the boy that looks into its depths. He sees a great room, richly furnished, a tall, dark man with long hair and a dagger in his belt—the assassin Malvolti—who is administering a drug to Lady Cardiff. But here his sight grows dim; he turns suddenly to John Inglesant, and asks him to look in the crystal; which, upon persuasion, John attempts. At first he perceives only a mist, but as the mist clears he is looking into another chamber, which Eustace knows to be part of an old family mansion where they are to stop on their way down. John looks again, and cries out, "I see a man's figure lying before the hearth, and the hearthstone stained as if with blood. Eustace, it is either you or I!" The magician eagerly bids him look once more, but he angrily refuses; and as he speaks a blast of wind, sudden and strong, sweeps through the room, the lamp burns dim, the fire in the brazier goes out, a deadly coldness fills the room, and the floor and the walls seem to heave and shake. The dread spirits pass away in storm. But they had unfolded his doom to Eustace; and, by a series of seemingly disjointed accidents, he is led to the house at Mintern where murder lies in wait for him. The last John Inglesant sees of his brother is in that fatal room—Eustace lying beneath the great carved chimney, his hair and clothes dabbled in blood, the stiletto of Malvolti in his heart.

In spite of its astrology, the story is here most graphic; it has mounted to its second great wave, the first being John Inglesant's trial. Now that his King is executed, his brother done to death, his party ruined, John himself fares forth, a banished man, from home and

country. He crosses to France, to Paris, meeting in a cloister there his old love, Mary Collet, and taking her parting words as a message from Heaven. But which way now? Must he ever be intriguing, discussing, lining his soul with worldly deceits? Can holiness agree with courts and camps? He was now willing to live like the Catholics around him; but he felt the need of a more spiritual teacher than his St. Clare. Had the Jesuit the only orthodox view at Rome? He bethought himself of a former friend, Hugh Cressy, an Oxford scholar of rare attainments, now a convert and a Benedictine in Paris. He went to him; and the interview was affecting and momentous. Cressy bore no likeness at all to St. Clare. He sought neither influence nor greatness; he believed in his Divine Master. To John Inglesant he offered a home at Douay, and with it a lifelong prospect of lowliness, self-denial, and obscurity. The reward he could promise was the treasure of peace, and heaven at last. The Teacher was to be One crowned with thorns; the light, a mysterious eclipse of natural powers; the life, a silence as upon Calvary. A high calling; but John asked himself tremulously, "Am I called?" and could not answer Yea. Slowly and sadly he turned from Serenus de Cressy; and who shall decide, asks the author, deeply moved, whether he was at that moment leaving Christ's company or no?

But the day after Inglesant's talk with Cressy all was changed. Alas, the Jesuit came! Mr. Shorthouse cannot know how incredible a thing his Jesuit is to us. For we hold him to be a mere impossibility, a chimæra, a symbolical nobody in the stage directions, own brother (as has been said) to First and Second Murderer, and in brief, all carved out of the carver's brain. That artist, we repeat, is not Mr. Shorthouse. He is the spirit that invented Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" and the thousand-and-one lying tales of horror that even yet have not run their course. How sad that these fantastic nonentities should squeak and gibber among our author's creations! But we have come to the final appearance of St. Clare. Arrived in Paris, he meets Inglesant almost distraught: rage and despair had taken hold of him on leaving

Cressy's; he was at his wit's end. Like a plausible demon the Jesuit offers him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He shall go on a mission to Rome, travelling as a friend of the Great Company; introductions to the cabinets of cardinals, princes, sovereign dukes, and what others he may desire, shall not be lacking; high as he will he has licence from Father-General to soar. The Jesuit wins. But yesterday Inglesant was casting away ambition; to-day he takes with a cynical smile all that it holds out to him.

Not the world's pleasures—he is no voluptuary; but the shows of power, and its servitude to visible things. For an immense hunger is eating his heart; he cannot forget Eustace or forgive his murderer, and the love of Mary Collet he has thrown away, to feed on dreams instead. Such is the chaotic perplexity, the passion without bound or shore, to which Jesuit Machiavellism, in league with Fortune, has brought our Platonist! Whereupon, his task being well over, *exit* the St. Clare. For which relief, kind author, much, nay, our heartiest, thanks! Yet the Jesuit's splendid daring and astonishing make-up must not go unapplauded. Seldom has an automaton, the cunning work of Dædalus, shown such flexible joints, or appeared so lively and amusing. We regret that his anatomy has been laid bare somewhat often; for now even children at a pantomime can tell you all the watchsprings there are in him. We fear that he must ere long be disposed of, and his harlequin disguises thrown in to make a bargain, at Rag Fair.

Inglesant, however, he is not to ruin. The divine fire has been hid under ashes; but it glows, it is not dead. A wider scene opens—that Italian world which in loveliest form and colour makes visible the Greco-Roman life, elsewhere extinct; irrecoverable now except from books, and these preyed upon by pedantic dullards. There is Naples, the only genuine Greek city left in Europe, beautiful, gay, wicked, teeming with quick passion, dancing the tarantella, like a Mænad rapt out of sense by musical frenzy, and painted for us, that have never seen one, on an antique lustrous vase. There is Florence, the severe city of the poet that came back

from hell and flung the gloomy greatness of his song over Duomo and Palazzo, the grim medieval stones of which enchant us, and are themselves a poem. There is Rome, Mother of the World, an epitome of all that man has been, of all that he shall be, a symbol deep as eternity, the Sphinx of Christian Europe, couched by Tiber on its yellow sands—a woman's face, a lion's heart. Rome has read the riddle of the ages, or it is not known: has she not the answer to it in her bosom? Oxford, Laudism, Puritanism, Royalism, how mean they have suddenly grown! They are as sand-heaps in the wilderness, which the breath of the simoon will scatter. But though, for thousands of years, the simoon has rained its deluges of fiery sands upon the World-Emblem, it is not overwhelmed; it rests calm as ever, colossal and yet most beautiful; mysterious, motherly, unchanging; wondrously attractive and unconquerable.

Towards that immense vision John Inglesant is setting his face. He lingers amid the quaint outlying cities—marble Siena, sculpturesque Florence, Umbria of sanctified renown; he perfects himself in the sweet Italian speech, and makes faithful friends. But his distaste for life and a touch of insanity (bequeathed on Newbury Field by a sword-stroke) drive him to Padua, where he puts on monastic weeds. Constant longings beset him to take Serenus de Cressy at his word: why not turn back into France, and walk henceforth on the King's highway of the Holy Cross? But he is not cheerful, as a true postulant should be; sadness weighs upon him, and a dreamy sense that not only are all things phantoms, but he himself a phantom among them. Remember it was the age of Cromwell; the times were not a little crazy from overmuch haranguing and revolutionary fever. Nor does Platonism fail to vex the mind's balance; on a sudden its votary feels himself in a world of ghosts—of ideas that lack dimension. John Inglesant, says the author, must have graduated saint or madman, had not his genius appeared to him very strangely—under the figure, let us call it, of Aristophanes in a scarlet biretta.

It was, however, a man that answered back to touch as well as sight. The head like Molière's, or a heathen

deity's, classic, graceful; the countenance fine, marked with the knowledge of good and evil in many a fold; the mind rapid, daring, free, able to look calmly upon the contrasts of life, sated with experience, tolerant by reason of its own proud self-sufficiency; the temper inclining to scornful laughter, capable of every feeling so long as it promised the unknown. In short, Aristophanes turned to a Roman Cardinal! He came to Padua; offered Inglesant a splendid career, such as might cure speculation by changing it to an amused study of mankind. He told him that life is a game of cards; that all things are ruled by Necessity, without reference to our fears or beliefs; that only lunatics endeavour after nobleness, though they never compass it; that the sum is, we should live out our day with ease and pleasantness.

Who can be sure of himself? Inglesant, feeling his kindness more than his arguments, accompanied Cardinal Rinuccini to Ferrara, and thence to Rome. He was in the mood that since his day has grown with our growing knowledge; that enjoys, whilst keenly watching, the myriad sensibilities which lie in a complex organism; that is sceptical to the utmost, for it makes trial of all things, but judges of none. He was like an actor at home in every kind; cast for comedy as for tragedy, yet never remembering what, off the stage, he really was. For the Cardinal said, "Each man plays (to a solemn bass of mystery and of the unseen) his own descant, as his taste or fate may suggest; but this manner of play is so governed and controlled by what seems a fatal necessity that all melts into a species of concord; and even the wild passions and deeds of men are so attempered that without them the entire piece would be incomplete."

Perilous wisdom this; but how endlessly more subtle than the Jesuit's arid algebra! how much more likely to prove that the end, be it God's honour or man's perfection, will make all things right! Faith, if it would here stand firm, must almost undermine its own foundation; which is, surely, that good will come, at last, out of evil. As come it will, no doubt; but never by undoing the law of righteousness in detail (as Rinuccini thinks) to establish

it, somehow, on the whole. John Inglesant and his worst temptation are face to face.

But the tempter speaks to his mere understanding; there is a spectacle that kindles his imagination and lifts him to higher emotions, more natural in him, and needing no casuistry for their defence—the spectacle of religious Rome. Infinite were the lights wherein the city gleamed to an eye that saw its imperial glories, its treasures from ancient wrecks, its shrines and churches, and the dreamy desolate grandeur of its vast Campagna. But these were, too, the trophies of Christian victory; the lights yielded an image at once sacred and winning: how could Inglesant resist it? Our author feels that a tolerant philosophy, such as moulded Roman manners, giving them the delightful gentleness which can be intellectual when it will, may, perhaps, consist with the most genuine religion. Though his Cardinal be Epicurean, his Roman people are not. He is even struck with the happiness they enjoyed. “A people whose physical wants were few and easily supplied; a city full of strangers, festivals, and shows; a conscience absolutely at rest; a community entirely set apart from politics, altogether at one with its government, by habit, by interest, and by religion; constituted a unique state and mental atmosphere wherein such philosophy naturally flourished.”

This sounds like a description of El Dorado; the actual Rome had its darkness and its miseries, as we too well know. But can modern Europe show us its equal? Upon this topic, and these chapters, written with a delicate originality, with feelings that seem to mingle deep sadness, yearning, distrust, love, and blind uncertainty, in a cup commended by the author as much to to his own lips as to ours, we would fain linger; every way suggestive they are, and their eloquence subdued and melting. Italian life comes before us in them as a perpetual sacred drama; nor does it keep the burlesque or humourous at a distance; but, taking man as he is made, it condones what is pardonable, hallows what is innocent, is at home in the great churches, and sets up in the market-place the Cross as a symbol of Eternal Mysteries.

The old Greek lightness, caught long ago from Athens and Corinth, has, no doubt, infected the Italian blood. Their religion, as the clear mind of Goethe viewed it, is the Beautiful. "The Beautiful," he says, "is higher than the Good—it includes the Good." But if simplicity, good-humour, affectionateness, temperance, patience, and courtesy are Christian virtues, then Italy is not so far from the Kingdom of God as our tourists are now saying, like David, in their haste. John Inglesant would not have held with them, for he became Italian in all things. Had fate smiled on him, he would have lived and died near Rome. And he might have lived on, listening to the Cardinal's refined but heathen discourses on Greek and Etruscan art; he might for many a season have taken part in his classic suppers, with their oldest of wines and newest of sonnets; he might have won a second dukedom to the Holy See, as he had won for it the dukedom of Umbria, had not his evil star driven him to marriage and engaged him in the newly-born heresy of Molinos.

The story now abounds in pretty, old-fashioned situations, and is gracefully quaint, like the devices at a carnival; its effect heightened by certain *bravuras*, as De Quincey would call them; certain musical descants on the glorious clearness of Italian landscapes; the silence, splendour, and sanctity of St. Peter's at Rome; the fairy-like and shadowy hues of Italian evenings, and the Peruginesque beauty of the Apennines shivering in spring-tide with all their fresh green woods. A striking proof that it is the mind and not the eye that sees; for the author, we understand, has scarcely travelled, except in imagination.

Meanwhile, his hero, falling in at Florence with a company of revellers, makes acquaintance with the Cavalier di Guardino, a nature moulded on the pure lines of Renaissance wickedness. But the Cavalier has a sister; and this Lauretta, who is nowise of Mary Collet's unworldly mood, becomes an attraction to John Inglesant. It is thus that he crosses the path of Malvolti, his brother's assassin, for Guardino and he had long been comrades. Inglesant, standing one afternoon near the stage of a Florentine theatre, is taken by the murderer for his brother's spirit;

but the illusion, though it recurred again, was momentary, and henceforth our Englishman needed all his courage and skill to escape the snares laid for him. He grew to be a great person at the Vatican. The Jesuits were ever his good friends; they had him sent to the last Duke of Umbria, that he might persuade the unhappy old man to devise his territories to Rome. Inglesant fulfilled the task in his own way. He repaired to the palace in Umbria, a stately pleasure-house and miracle of florid architecture, and stayed there long, comforting the scrupulous soul of the Duke, whom confessors and divines had depressed into the blackest humour. He became his friend, and was winning him to cheerfulness again, when a message from Florence recalled the Englishman to Lauretta. Malvolti had planned to make an end of his integrity as well as his life. The scheme was subtle, but that which might ruin an Italian had little power upon a calmer mind; and our friend came off the victor.

He hurried straight to Rome, for Innocent X. was just dead, and the Conclave assembling. A place was found for him in it as confidant of Cardinal Chigi, who, after a long delay, came forth from the Cappella Paolina to be crowned Pope. But here the story rises into a region of wild romance, so beclouded with mystery and murder, with factions, premeditated poisonings, and midnight encounters, that we suspect our chronicler (being strange to these things) has taken Guicciardini as an authority on Alexander VII., when he is only such, if at all, on Alexander VI. The year 1655 is not the year 1492. However, one is glad to forget the Conclave, and mount, with Inglesant, to the hills once more. His Duke of Umbria has left his dukedom to the Church, and is dying. We cannot stay to argue a case in feudal law; nor does it signify now what claim the Popes had upon Urbino or Ferrara, which the author is here glancing at. By the intricate Italian politics of the seventeenth or any century the prerogatives of St. Peter neither stand nor fall. But the Duke was obeying his conscience. That he could die calmly, clad in the *veste angelica* of religion, he owed to this gentle stranger, whose silence in matters of policy was a stronger argument than much diplomatic protocolling.

He bestowed on Inglesant a fief in the Apennines, created him Cavalier di San Giorgio, and would have him hasten to Rome and wed Lauretta, that the news might be brought back to Umbria ere he died.

It was at such a height of fortune that Inglesant, in glistening armour, with a retinue of richly attired servants about him, overtook, in a wild mountain-pass, his brother's murderer. Malvolti is in rags and miserable; unarmed, alone, he lies at the mercy of his captor, and with all manner of supplication he prays Inglesant on his knees to spare him. A mild light breaks suddenly over the countenance of the young man. He is touched with divine compassion, and lets Malvolti go. No wonder that his face shone like an angel's when, in the still morning, he communicated at the altar of a wayside chapel, or that his sudden coming and vanishing again were long famed among the hills as an apparition of the heroic St. George! A season of calm followed. When Malvolti passed from the scene, his companion in vice, Guardino, could not be found. Inglesant, wedding Lauretta, took her to his new home in the Umbrian solitude, and the years glided on peacefully.

But the fairy tale is not ended yet; nor can it end at all in that simple recitative, "they lived happy ever after." Inglesant woke one day to feel that the plague was spreading dusky wings over the land. Lauretta urged him to seek her brother, whom she still loved; and with unwilling heart he trod the streets of Rome once more. He was led on to Naples, and beheld that most awful sight, a southern city festering to death in tropical sunshine. Guardino he could only track by plague-stricken ways. But a surprise lay in store for him. In the great hospital, doing loathliest offices among the dead and dying, he came upon Malvolti, a murderer and infidel once, but now converted. Eustace's brother and Eustace's assassin met in the eventide at Santa Chiara; and in the vast stillness Malvolti told his tale. Eustace had been revenged at last. In a frantic brawl the Cavalier di Guardino had put out his comrade's eyes with a dagger; and the unhappy man must have perished body and soul had not a light from heaven shown him his Redeemer. It was at Rome. He had reached the Capitol,

and sunk down beneath the balusters at the top of the marble stairs. But we will let him speak. The season is Christmas :

Close by, in the Ara Cœli, the simple country people and the faithful, whose hearts were as those of little children, kneeling as the shepherds knelt upon the plains of Bethlehem, saw the Christ-child lying in a manger, marked out from common childhood by a mystic light which shone from His face and form ; while the organ harmonies which filled the church resigned their wonted splendours, and bent for once to pastoral melodies, which, born amid the rustling of sedges by the river brink, have wandered down through the reed music and festivals of the country people, till they grew to be the most fitting tones of a religion which takes its aptest similes from the vineyards and the flock. . . . Suddenly, it seemed to me, I was conscious of a general movement and rush of feet. The churches became emptied, the people pouring out into the streets ; the dead Christs above the altars faded from their crosses, and the sacred tapers went out of their own accord ; for it spread through Rome, as in a moment, that a miracle had happened at the Ara Cœli, and that the living Christ was come.

Malvolti continues, in a passage of remarkable weirdness, its lines clear, but its effect strange and ghostly, reminding us of Holman Hunt :

He came down the steps of the Ara Cœli, and the sky was full of starlike forms, wonderful and gracious ; and all the steps of the Capitol were full of people down to the square of the Ara Cœli, and up to the statue of Aurelius on horseback above ; and the summit of the Capitol among the statues, and the leads of the Palace Caffarelli, were full of eager forms ; for the starlight was so clear that all might see ; and the dead gods, and the fauns, and the satyrs, and the old pagans, that lurked in the secret hiding-places of the ruins of the Cæsars, crowded up the steps out of the Forum, and came round the outskirts of the multitude, and stood upon the fallen pillars that they might see. And Castor and Pollux, that stood by their unsaddled horses at the top of the stairs, left them unheeded, and came to see ; and the Marsyas that stood bound broke his bonds and came to see ; and spectral forms swept in from the distance in the light, and the air was full of powers and existences, and the earth rocked as at the Judgment Day. He came down the steps of the Campidoglio, and He came to me. He was not at all like the pictures of the Saints ; for He was pale, and worn, and thin, as though the fight were not yet half over—ah, no !—but through the pale and worn look shone infinite power and undying love and unquenchable resolve. The crowd fell back on every side ; but when He came to me He

stopped. "Ah!" he said, "is it thou? What doest thou here? Knowest thou not that thou art mine? Thrice mine—mine centuries ago when I hung upon the cross; mine when thou camest a little child to baptism; mine when, forfeit by every law, a servant and friend of mine gave thee over to me. Surely I will repay." . . . He passed on; but among ten thousand times ten thousand I should know Him; and amid the tumult of a universe I should hear the faintest whisper of His voice.

Well for us if we could break off here. The "Fioretti" of St. Francis might record such a grace as that Malvolti received, and in turn bestowed; for he and Inglesant discovered their common enemy and ministered to him during a loathsome agony. But the romance had a larger purpose, and one less edifying to Catholic minds. The beautiful woman must end in a fish's tail; Mr. Adolphus Trollope must write a sequel to Hawthorne's "Transformation." For when Guardino and Malvolti were gone, Inglesant, returning home, found wife and child lying dead within his own threshold, and seeking comfort once more in religion, took the habit of the Benedictines at Rome. There he watched the dawn, as he deemed it, of a spiritual new birth coming over the city. He had long known and revered Molinos. This apostle of Quietism, whose name and teaching have grown very dim to us, appears in "John Inglesant" as an enlightened, liberal soul, not lacking courage, and of a purity equal to his wisdom. He won the heart of our English Platonist; which need not surprise us, for their principles were the same. Both would have described themselves as men intent on the real essence of things, struggling against men intent on the mere forms and semblances of things; both were champions of the Mysticism that overspread Europe in the seventeenth century. They carried to perilous excess the doctrine of the Inward Light, which under the modern name of Free Thought is disintegrating society, and as Free Love is abolishing morality. They called themselves disciples of the Spirit.

Molinos—who is not to be confounded with the Jesuit Molina—dreamt of a religion that should pass beyond the sense of sin. Obedience to the Spirit, which he termed

the mystic death, was a trance of all our powers, suspending conscience and lifting men to a region where good works and the ordinances of the Church—confession, prayer, mortification, and the sacraments—were not so much as remembered. The soul, arrived at renunciation of all its activity, was free. But what if the senses revolted against law and conscience? Molinos answered that the deeds of the flesh could not sully the enraptured spirit. Here is the root and principle of Quakerism—that ordinances are nought. Here is the Platonism that, dissolving the unity of man, fixes his gaze upon the abstract and makes that his god. Here is the imagination exalted, instinct let loose from reason, realities tending to become dreams, and dreams realities. If to lean on the forms of things alone be superstition, and to sacrifice the present to the past be death, is it not true that we never actually transcend such forms or cut ourselves adrift from history? What enemies are more dangerous to humanity and progress than fanatics pretending a commission from the Most High? There is no principle in our nature that can govern alone. And the synthesis that combines them all to our lasting good is the faith of Holy Church, whereby saints may be philosophers, and poets become prophets of the Infinite. We may dispense with art in religion (since forms of belief and practice are simply this) when birds fly without wings and light is made visible without a medium. But can there be a more dreadful delusion than to see God where He is not, or to imagine ourselves more enlightened than Jesus Christ? Molinos was deluded so, and he drew Inglesant after him.

How shall we tell the story? In the mildest of versions it will read like a satire. And we do not wish to satirise “John Inglesant.” But we must remember that there are two histories of Molinism. The Protestant tradition asserts that Molinos, a holy and much persecuted man, had thought of bestowing on Rome a higher religion, which would no longer tolerate formality and routine. His heaviest blow was aimed at habitual confession; he suggested that none should confess unless they had fallen into deadly sin. As the contemplative man or woman could only sin by lapsing into reflection and

activity, it was clear they need never confess at all. A short way, truly, with the Jesuits, whose occupation, we are told, was to absolve fashionable sinners. But these spiritual directors took the alarm. They had counted on their invention of "Sufficient Grace" as the finest of "springs to catch woodcocks"; yet here was a Spanish mystic outbidding them with the cry of "No Confession." They must strike him with paralysis, or be themselves stricken.

In a moment they decided. Molinos was at once arrested; Father Esparsa, a backsliding Jesuit who had licensed his pernicious book, disappeared and was seen no more. But what need the Inquisition care for Habeas Corpus? Seventy persons in a single day vanished from Rome, and not a man, unless he confessed at the Gesù, could sleep in peace. Nay, the cry went that even the reigning Pope had spoken kindly to Molinos, and was perhaps a Quietist in secret; but the General of the Jesuits examined and absolved him, and confidence was restored. Did our author ever see the Grand Inquisitor in Schiller's "Don Carlos"? That invincible man was half-minded to make an *auto da fè* of Philip II. But the King repented; and in like manner did the Pope. He gave up Molinos, and sat by to watch the struggle between Quakers and Jesuits. The fine ladies and gentlemen to whom Molinos had seemed an oracle of heaven were now roused from their siesta, or "prayer of quiet," and held a picturesque meeting in the palace of the Pope's nephew. Thither came cardinals, princes, monks, nuns—a rare catalogue—and among them Inglesant. His chastened eloquence availed nothing. The conspirators did not believe in each other; and they quailed before the Society of Jesus. Soon the meeting slipped away like water; and swift as lightning, or the Atlantic cable, report of it was carried to the enemy's headquarters.

Though he knew it would be so, Inglesant demanded an interview with the General. Ought he not to make a last effort for freedom and light? But the Old Man of the Mountain was wary, inexorable, sarcastic, and triumphant. Inglesant would have been content with toleration; he did not ask for approval. But, to our amazement, he

shrank from the argument which he could have well sustained. The Molinists might be fanatical ; but what were the Jesuits, if they were all like Fr. St. Clare ? Not Catholics, surely ; more like hypocrites and Sadducees, one would think. He took a different line. The Society, said John, had held a course of compromise with all men, and especially with the weak and frail, and this he had ever thought a trait to be admired, one in which it had been likeliest to the Divine charity, though the world had been very severe upon it. Why not now apply that policy to dogmatic differences which had become a tradition in dealing with sins of the flesh ? Why not extend a little of that infinite pity to the submissive and pure in heart that seek after God ? “ Else you will fall into inconsistency, and then it will be difficult,” he remarked, with a glance toward Pascal and Sainte-Beuve, “ not to write a satire about you.” The General was almost shaken out of his propriety. For less than this, he told Inglesant, a man had found that there were dungeons in Castel Sant’ Angelo which paid no window tax. But it was a passing shower. He soliloquised in the manner dear to melodrama, and gave Inglesant his blessing, to receive which the Quietist knelt with wonted grace on the steps of the Gesù, seeming thereby to recant his opinion and betray his party.

The prisoners were released on abjuring tenets which they had never held. Molinos himself retracted in the great Inquisition-Church of the Minerva ; and our author thinks that the Roman populace, on seeing him, shouted “ Fire, fire !” But we would submit that they were tolerant and philosophical, as we have heard ; and they cannot have delighted much in faggots, the San Benito, or roasted flesh ; for they had not feasted on these things during many years.

Molinos, at any rate, was not “ butchered to make a Roman holiday.” Neither was he shut up in the windowless quarter of Sant’ Angelo. Confined in a monastery he certainly was. He might be thankful to fare no worse. The Spirit of the Age (which is neither angel nor devil) reviled toleration in those days as worse than Socinian, as blank Atheism. That spirit

had witnessed Servetus agonising in the flames, more than a century before ; it could still remember how Melanchthon had put heart into Calvin on the occasion, writing to him : “ Tuo judicio prorsus assentior ; etiam vestros magistratus juste fecisse, quod hominem blasphemum, re ordine judicata, interfecerunt.” There was no Liberalism at Lambeth or Geneva, and there was less toleration than at Rome. Our author dwells on the clemency shown in this business of Quietism, as in others like it, by the Holy Office. True, in the romance, John Inglesant enjoys for a few days the view from Castel Sant’ Angelo ; he is, as it were, imprisoned ; but this was an almost playful warning from the Father-General that he must now seek his native air, and meddle with Roman mysteries no more. They took an affectionate, nay, tender, leave of one another ; Inglesant loved the Society still, and they never dealt harshly with him. But that is the last glimpse we catch of Rome and the Jesuits.

John came back to England, an Anglican once more, and founded on the borders of Wales a house of prayer, where he died and was buried. Carved on his tomb is a profession of the only things which he held certain : “ Sub isto marmore, Johannes Inglesant Peccator, usque ad judicium latet, expectans revelationem filiorum Dei.” But he bids us farewell more pleasantly, walking in the meadows over which Worcester Cathedral looks out towards the Malverns, when sunset is flooding the sky and the gentle river. There he sums up the argument of his life and of the book. He cares little for politics. His heart is in the battle of the Churches, which divides a man against himself—obedience and faith against reason and freedom. It is an awful agony. But one thing has now grown clear to him—the tyranny of Dogma. It is that which sentences Rome ; for Rome has traded on the highest instincts of the heart—its love and passionate remorse, its yearning after the unseen, its faith and self-denial. For the stones of her foundation she has truths as deep as life or death ; but she has set up her gates on the suppression of knowledge, and her walls by banning free thought. She has played into the hands of vice, greed, and cruelty. She is the enemy of the human race.

The Catholic Church is not so much a system as Satan that has usurped Christ's judgment-seat.

But the Church of England, he goes on to say, has neither equal nor parallel. Logic may scorn her; but what matter? She allows reason and faith to dwell side by side. She has abolished confession and priests who work miracles; still she offers her sacraments freely, and they avail "with those that believe in them." Her discipline is imperfect; her destruction would be a calamity. When it is argued that she speaks only with bated breath; that Rome has a logical position, nor ever falters in her tone; that if absolute truth be revealed, there must be an oracle to expound it, and that oracle the Holy See; Inglesant replies: "Absolute truth is not revealed; and that is the only answer possible. Treating Christianity as the absolute truth has debased it, inflicting on us dogmas and creeds which suit only base mechanic understandings." Then the Idealist in him speaks: "Superstition is one extreme, Scepticism another. Hold fast by Divine Light and the Law of Progress. Virtue, Justice, Love, are not mere names beginning with a capital letter. They are elements of the Ideal; which is, though we know not where, and our highest culture views it still from afar. But let us keep loyal to Progress, Development, Evolution (a real instinct in us, explain it how we may), and then, treading Superstition under foot, imitating Christ, the Master of the Ideal method, we shall, though on earth, have our conversation in Heaven."

These are high themes. Have we leave, ere sunset fades off the tower of Worcester, to say a word upon them, by Severn-side? Roman or not Roman is ever the question. Look at the great structure which Inglesant will seem in the popular imagination to have reared: a thing monstrous in its architecture—vast, gloomy, unhallowed; haunted by demons; with a name and the interpretation thereof graven above its portals. The name is Rome, the interpretation Jesuitism. Two distorted figures, like Titanic caryatides, bear the immense edifice upon their shoulders—Machiavelli the Jesuit, Aristophanes the Cardinal. They must be taken as types, not accidents, of the Catholic religion; otherwise, indeed, the

story is somewhat out of date, and its argument a fallacy. Demolish these sons of Atlas, and the Temple of Iniquity must fall; it will be seen as a caricature or cloud-phantom, a little dubious sunshine reflected in grotesque combinations upon miles of mist. Where then, we ask, do these Jesuit unbelievers—these Cardinals that, like Roman augurs, never look one another in the face without smiling; these religious that die for their faith but count it a mockery—inhabit in the world's annals? Has John Inglesant chapter and verse for them? We do not speak of this individual or that, although it is our candid conviction that no such Jesuit as St Clare has ever lived. Neither do we speak of men that secretly disbelieved the creed they taught. The Church that could not reach them need not answer for them. But we ask for proof from our author that his Jesuit sums up the Society of Jesus, and his Cardinal the Sacred College. What manuals, treatises, secret correspondences, *lettres édifiantes*, will he produce in court as evidence? These are old calumnies to rip up again; how came a Platonist and lover of the truth by such worn-out gear?

We are afraid that he wove the threads together in the famous loom *à priori*; by combining Jesuit maxims misunderstood with traditionary legends never verified. But suppose the *à priori* loom is capable only of weaving romance, and not history? The Truth has now been incarnate among men since the coming of Christ; it is a great visible fact, though supernatural, too. Its dimensions are not to be taken Platonically, with a theodolite. If history shows that the Catholic Church and the thing which he calls "Jesuitism" be inextricably combined, we will allow to John Inglesant that Christianity, as a distinct and regal power in the world, is dead. The days of the Son of Man will be over, then; and we must needs wait, despondingly enough, for "the blaze of a purer Mythos." Only let us first understand, quite clearly, what Jesuitism is. A very precise description of it was once given in "*Fors Clavigera*" as follows:—

My friend (says Mr. Ruskin) the follies of [this creed], many and great though they be, are practically summed in the denial or neglect of the quality and intrinsic value of things. Its rectangular

beatitudes and spherical benevolences—theology of universal indulgence and jurisprudence that will hang no rogues—mean, one and all, in the root of them, incapacity of discerning, or refusal to discern, worth or unworth in anything, and least of all in man; whereas Nature and Heaven command you at your peril to discern worth and unworth in everything, and most of all in man.

How this winged word transfixes, like an arrow, our splendid St Clare! Is he not done to the life? His scepticism, his leniency, his lax theologies and moralities—it is the very man, as he shows in the book, however the author meant him. This, too, is Carlyle's "Jesuit" in the "Latter-Day Pamphlets," who has put out the lamp of his intellect, and sells formulas in the market-place, indifferent himself of what kind they are, as a blind man might sell green or yellow spectacles on demand. Here are the first English "Jesuits," and Escobar and Diana, and the Father-General in our story, and the whole Black Militia. Only mark well, reader, that Ruskin has not been describing the Jesuits at all—he has not said one word about them; he is defining, not Catholicism, but "Liberalism." Is there no light shown us here? Surely the Jesuits that preach Christ everywhere, and the "Liberals" that crucify Him all day long, are not and never have been one and the same. Theories are a fleet of glass when they dash upon the rocks of history and experience; and such a rock is the antagonism, not to be put by, of religious "Liberalism" and the Roman Church. If one of these be the thing called Jesuitism, the other is not. Our author declares that the Jesuits have carried into all lands the worship of Jesus Christ. That is a vital admission. But not they alone, we say. The Church through all her orders and ministries has exalted the person and mind of her Master, and poured out His grace on mankind. Is not this, as Ruskin calls it, to discern the intrinsic quality and worth which there is in all things? For to preach Christ is to advance mankind.

Through all dimness and obstructions it is growing clearer, then, that the Ideal Christianity has its centre in Rome. And if Christ cannot save a world fast hurrying to ruin—burning its religion as "a pestilential heap of Hebrew old clothes," and so falling to savagery

and nakedness—where is the power that can? How many virtues are not dead, how many noblenesses not falling extinct, outside the circle of the Faith? Christianity, we hold, is absolute truth made visible in the forms most sacred, congenial, and intelligible to us; nor will the perilous trance of Quietism ever supply to men and women the abiding energy that transforms the weakness of the flesh to the splendour of the spirit.

May not this be the key to "John Inglesant"? He would fain come to the Father, but in drawing nigh to Him he is tempted into forgetfulness of the Son. Surely when Christ said, "No man cometh to the Father except by Me," He meant also, "No man abideth in the Father unless He abide in Me." We cannot transcend the Son, nor express the divine truth but according to His mind. Acknowledge His grace and presence in history, and the Church will shine out with a clearness as of noonday. But so to acknowledge Christ is to exchange Free Thought for the simplicity which believes in His word as truly as it feels His undying influence.

Our author sees God in a dream; for the vision of things in the sunshine we need the euphrasy and rue of humble faith to purge our eyes from the sleep wherein we take phantoms for realities. That soaring Cathedral of the Ages which he has been viewing from without, and calling Romanism and Jesuitism, seems to him now a pile of mouldering ruins; the dead of eighteen centuries lie beneath its pavement; and shattered arch and fallen architrave, and here and there a column not yet flung down, are but melancholy memorials of what they wrought in life. The great stained windows seem darkened glass, clamped together by mildewed bits of lead, holding on them for awhile some smutch of hieroglyphic painting; the altar and sacrifice and golden lights an earthquake has removed. He studies the horizon, and no fresh stars are coming up the sky. The future is dark; the grey years bear a burden towards us which we cannot see. He does not hope, but like a true mystic he can resign himself to the Unfathomable Will. How different, we say to him, had he faith in the Word of the Father! Then he might know the Cathedral of the

Ages as it truly is: a temple all glorious within; its lamps kindled for the sacrifice that consecrates and ransoms Nature no less than Man; its music never silent; its song of all kindreds and peoples as they kneel in white raiment round immemorial shrines; its windows flaming with ruby and amethyst, with the number numberless of saints immortalised and hierarchies made visible in Heaven; and, casting down lights like the promise of morning on the Eastern altar, he might lift his eyes above, to the Rose of Christ.

III

CARLYLE¹

WHAT more, at this time of day, can be said of Thomas Carlyle? Friends and enemies have uttered all they know. Anthony Froude published his "Reminiscences" in two volumes, the "Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle" in three, and the life of the Sage of Chelsea himself in four. We have had, since then, his correspondence with Emerson, and more "Letters" of Mrs. Carlyle's. Thus much may we turn to as evidence when we would judge the teacher by his actions, opportunities, surroundings, and most private bosom thoughts. As for his teaching, it is accessible to every reader in thirty-four volumes octavo, the library edition; and it is a known fact that we may explore them many days without encountering a tract of wilderness. Carlyle's genius was as extraordinary as it was incontestable. His pages are strange, wild, and picturesque, vehement and earnest, abounding in such a taking quaintness of thought and speech that the reader who is to find dullness in them must have imported his own thither. As we study them now, they are a history and a prophecy stretching over some fifty years. The first of his collected essays, on Jean Paul Richter, appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* of 1827. The last, a sketch not thoroughly revised, of the "Kings of Norway," came out in 1872. During that long period, praise and blame of no stinted kind were lavished on his writings. Authors of the first rank declared that they could not read them; they had tried, and the book had

¹ "Reminiscences." By Thomas Carlyle. Edited by J. A. Froude. 1881. "Thomas Carlyle." A History of the First Forty Years of his Life. By J. A. Froude. 1882. "Carlyle's Life in London." By J. A. Froude. 1884.

fallen from their hands. But some, like Froude, made him their standard in all things, measuring by his approbation their success or failure. Men laid bare their secret thoughts in commenting on his. Arthur Clough, Charles Kingsley, Dean Stanley, Emerson, John Ruskin, spirits of the most varied genius, took a deep impress from his teaching, and were proud to be called his disciples. Dickens worshipped him; and for a time John Mill under his influence seemed to be drifting into Mysticism. On one side he joined hands with the straitest sect of Radicals; on another, his strangely chequered friendship with Irving brought him face to face with that outburst of the preternatural which men call Irvingism, but which believers in its divine origin style the Catholic and Apostolic Church. The meditative Carlyle, looking down on mankind like his own Teufelsdröckh, from a garret-window near the sky, beheld most human phenomena; but, unlike Teufelsdröckh, passed sentence on them with such loud anathemas that the multitudes in the street could not but pause and look upwards to discover whence the sounds issued; nor, on catching sight of the prophet's grotesque figure, did they refrain from emphatic criticism on the nature of the interruption to their business. An interesting theme any time this half-century, Carlyle became still more so at his death. A whole literature has grown up round Mr. Froude's volumes; and what remains, it may be asked, except to keep silence until time has made his hero immortal in the sight of mankind, or, as perhaps it will, a forgotten prodigy?

Of a truth, on laying down the story of his life, one is inclined rather to think over it than to attempt a funeral oration. Whatever Carlyle may appear when historical perspective reveals his true proportions, to us he is great and even portentous, a genius of the first magnitude; of such transcendent "insight and out-sight," to quote Robert Browning, that we cannot but think of him with astonishment. Was he a prophet? We will endeavour to find out that ere we quit him; but this is certain, that he put on the manner of a prophet, and thundered forth his enigmatic sayings as

with a God-given authority, in such unexpected, overpowering fashion, that not to heed him has been for us, I say, impossible. And these volumes show him in his habit as he lived, wrestling with the chaos outside and the tumult within; sad, thoughtful, melancholy, poverty-stricken, wild and fierce, a lover of mockery and laughter, and of the grimmest saturnine humour; despising, it must be briefly said, all men; hating the common run of mankind as fools; finding no light in any living mortal save Goethe; pierced through and through with a sense of the world's mystery, which at times drove him mad; at war with all religious and formulated beliefs; distrustful of science, disdainful of literature; heartsick and headsick, and altogether distempered; solitary and unmanageable; a terror to those that loved him, a burden to himself; praising in time of trouble "the Roman way" by which men fell on their swords and were quit of the whole miserable coil of things; an arrogant, sad-faced, broken-spirited man, who, in this world, had bidden farewell to hope, and did all he accomplished by dint of "judicious desperation"; everywhere restless, gloomy, and as under a curse: to sum up, the Swift of the nineteenth century.

"You have just seen the most miserable man alive," said Archbishop King to a friend who encountered Swift coming from him. Carlyle, in his day, was the "most miserable man alive"—at least, of those that gave vent to their misery in writing. There have been too many like him since the Revolution, fit companions at that lugubrious festal board described by Hawthorne, to which none were admitted but such as brought with them an incurable sorrow. The poetry of the age and its most enduring prose are steeped in melancholy. What sadder songs than those of Heine and Leopardi? What more discouraging eloquence than that of Obermann, or the stern and statuesque elegiacs of Matthew Arnold? A feeling of dreadful, irremediable blankness in things, as though the universe had no heart, is perceptible in the most famous writing of the nineteenth century, and has invaded metaphysics, finding expression there as the creed of Pessimism. The vacuity, the darkness which

thus shaped themselves into words, dwelt all his life long at the heart of Carlyle; his endless dissatisfaction with men was rooted in the despair that seized him whenever he looked abroad. The universe was either a Devil's world or given over to the Devil. He saw no ray of light anywhere. Again and again he writes in his journal, *Cor ne edito*, "Devour not thine own heart"; but for very rage and anguish he could not cease from devouring it. Sir Leslie Stephen has said that Swift is the most tragic figure in the history of English letters. But there is now a second, worthy in many respects to take his place by the side of that great unhappy man, whom it is impossible not at once to love and to hate beyond measure.

Carlyle had not, indeed, the hard masculine fibre of Swift; he had a woman's heart, and wept piteously over himself. Swift thought no better of Swift than he did of his fellows; they were all despicable, base, and unclean, and himself among them; whereas Carlyle was borne up not only by a conviction of his genius, but by the sense of rectitude which never left him. This it was that tempered his extreme misery. Otherwise he, too, might have spoken of the savage indignation that tore his heart. How easy, then, and all unprofitable, to dwell on a life's misery, which has now, at length, grown quiet in the grave! Wretchedness on so great a scale fascinates like a story of murder; but it is not wholesome to think long of it, or to speak of it at all. It is a sorrow too great for words, too sacred for the noonday glare of magazine criticism; and the lesson it teaches is, at first sight, disedifying and unchristian. For what can it seem to many but an argument from experience, founded upon the facts of life, against the possibility of a God? No Atheism is deeper than Swift's unconscious fierceness, unless it be Obermann's resignation, and the sadness of these in presence of the nature of things, finds its parallel in Carlyle. Must we not trace it to the same source? The jaundice of unbelief is infectious, bringing with it not only a dull and eating pain, but a cloud over the mind musing upon many things, and disposed to interpret them for the worst. This is the sadness that has slain its thousands, overwhelming heaven and earth in one confusion, and

tumbling all things fair and good into a common abyss. What profit, I ask, in speaking of it?

Nor would one feel tempted to speak when the judgment of the world, as now, is severe upon Carlyle. Mr. Froude has resolved, rightly or wrongly, that men shall know him *intus et in cute*; stripped of all "wrappages and enswathments" he stands forlorn before the gaze of the "twenty-seven millions, mostly fools," who at one time or other have visited the Thames Embankment in search of the statue erected to him by fatuous admirers. Carlyle showed no mercy to the average; on great criminals he had compassion—the men of September like Danton, the kings of terror like Robespierre; but conventional good men, or "gigmen," excited in him a loathing which he took no pains to hide. The gigmen have their will upon him now; they are delighted to be shown a Scottish and London interior as miserable as any circle of Dante's "Inferno." The searchings of heart, the divisions and disappointments of Carlyle and his wife, seem to pull them down from their lofty eminence, leaving them in the mire to be trampled on. With surprise the reading public learnt that Carlyle was a despot of the hearth, and had almost driven his wife from him by what she considered unfeeling neglect, if not moral faithlessness. His biographer, candid or unrelenting, tells the tale, and affects to apologise. But the world has turned a deaf ear to Mr. Froude's pleadings; it condemns both parties—Mrs. Carlyle for marrying where she did not love, Carlyle for immolating on his domestic altar a radiant, accomplished woman, whose thoughts he would not be at the trouble to comprehend. The critics do not fear that he will rise from his grave at Ecclefechan to transfix them with an epithet, and they speak their minds freely. Carlyle is dead; Sauerteig has died with him, and Herr Teufelsdröckh will never again annihilate his enemies with the lightning which he carried about in his bosom. The freedom of the press has revived since Carlyle's right hand lost its cunning. Had he anticipated the future, he might, like Othello, have cried out:

I am not valiant neither,
But every puny whipster gets my sword.

At such a time those of us that feel indebted to Carlyle for wise teachings and much honest laughter would prefer to keep silence. If he was not wise for himself, he has been wise for others ; the perplexities he fought and overcame need not concern us, but only the fruit he has gathered of many years' thinking. Let us be silent and sorry. It is cold comfort to know that another great man has been proved no hero to his *valet de chambre*. Carlyle, says a witty friend, is one of the *dieux déchus*, a fallen Dagon, lying with head and hands lopt off on the threshold of his house. Had he been nothing better than an idol the thing were well done. But Carlyle's history and writings suggest another moral than that of arrogance scourging its own back and selfishness turning to ineffectual repentance. Neither is it necessary to swell by a single syllable the shout of condemnation that broke forth when Mrs. Carlyle's letters appeared. Is it not enough that she was the Stella of this modern Swift, and that he knew he had wronged her ? To this day there are partisans of Swift and Stella ; a hundred years hence critics may still be divided on the question of Carlyle's married life. It was very unhappy ; a romance dashed with ignoble details. But a worse misfortune was that both husband and wife were endowed with a rare gift of writing, and have painted the shadowy clouds of their sky as in everlasting fresco. Each has written for the biographer ; their miserable dissensions are become the gossip of one generation, and must find a place in the literature of the next.

Such babbling no man, unless he hated the living Carlyle, will desire to increase now that he has passed away into the Great Silence. Let the silence make an end of whatsoever in him was not worthy to endure ; let it burn up the chaff that mingled with the fine gold of his character and teaching. It imports us, however, to understand the principles he held, and to decide for ourselves how far we can accept them. And that seems a task which late reviewers have not taken in hand. "The form a rhapsody, the substance commonplace,"—this is how a shrewd critic summed up Carlyle to me. Mr. Venables, his old and intimate acquaintance, confessed

that, whatever the sage may have taught, he, Mr. Venables, could not understand it; he knew neither the dream nor the interpretation thereof. "Obscure as an oracle," says another, who does not believe in oracles, and thinks Apollo was a superior sort of *Times* editor, skilful at conjecturing how the wind would blow. But Mr. Froude has not shrunk from naming Carlyle in the same breath with St. Paul as one whom the greatness of the message he had to deliver did almost overwhelm, and as the most fervent and inspired of latter-day preachers, oppressed with a mighty thought for the deliverance of his fellow-men. What now, we ask ourselves, was that message, not simply as Carlyle conceived of it, but as it is likely to appear when the thick dust of contemporary gossip has fallen, and time has done its work of sifting and appraising among the thirty-four volumes of this latest apostle?

The most important fact about any man, says Carlyle, is his religion. No Catholic will dispute that; nor will the careful thinker. A man's religion turns upon his real innermost belief concerning the whence and whither of the universe; its origin, meaning, and destiny. All minor questions are solved in principle when these find their solution; and until they do, our sciences resemble the stones lying abroad over a field, which may be built up into a prison, a palace, or a shed for cattle. In vain will a man strive to hold no opinion, to believe that it does not signify to have a belief. As the French proverb runs, *Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée*, we cannot leave a door neither shut nor open. All our actions cannot be indifferent, nor all our beliefs a delicate scepticism. Carlyle's beliefs, at any rate, were not all scepticism; they had body and substance, and determined his action as if they were articles of faith. He was nothing if not a religious teacher. His vocation, as he viewed it, is found in Amos: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock; and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel." Like Amos, he beheld the burden of the nations, especially of that England which had overthrown Napoleon. When, towards the

close of his life, another and a different England was springing up, he felt that his vision had grown somewhat dim, nor had he the same confidence in the dreams of his youth. To Catholic nations, which he studied chiefly in books and knew only by hearsay, he had no message. But he might still be a prophet, though much lay wholly out of his ken ; and we shall not not be justified in turning from him unless the incompleteness of his testimony makes it false or dangerous, for here, as elsewhere, *non addidisse est decerpisse*. And I will say at once that Carlyle, true messenger from the Ideal though I hold him to be, took away from the sum of religious knowledge more than he brought to it.

This great and noble spirit did not know Christ. In this way he fell short of the standard of truth and eclipsed the light of his fellows. He sank to the level of a heathen Stoic ; nay, he went back to the dispensation of fear which lacks the Stoic rectitude and calm. His law was that of Sinai, not of the Mount of Beatitudes ; the lesson which he loved to repeat rose no higher than that of the Hebrew Testament interpreted without reference to the New. In his Bible there was no New Testament. And while it is a portentous fact that England still needs, at this stage of history, to be terrified into morality and religion by the threat of temporal retribution, it must be ever a lowering of Carlyle in the scale of greatness that he taught rather like his own Mohammed than like the Master of Light. "What can you say of him," asked Ruskin, "except that he lived in the clouds and was struck by lightning?" a beautiful and true summary of the man's spirit in deed as in word. But struck by lightning he was ; he could not wield it with impunity. How much less could he say to the storm raging all through his century, "Peace, be still!" He spoke mighty words, but he had little in common with that dovelike, brooding spirit which drew forth strength out of sweetness, and was able to hush the great waters and rebuke the waves. *Facta est tranquillitas magna*. That is the miracle which Carlyle never wrought on himself or any man that sought his aid.

I do not think it misleading to hold up this standard, the power and wisdom of Christ, as the only test of

greatness in a community which has known the Gospel. Any other must, in the long run, prove fallacious. If we are to speak of religious teachers and to be guided by their words, let us never forget that the absolute teaching, as is confessed on all hands, remains that of Christ. The Old Law must be preached, indeed, to those whose training has made them incapable of receiving the New without it. But the teacher ought not to share their limitation and incapacity. Carlyle, it is impossible to doubt, was neither Greek nor Christian, but Old Hebrew. He never did get quite clear of Houndsditch, endeavour as he might ; and though, with perverse ingratitude, he reviled the Jews and everything Jewish, even Mr. Froude admits that his chief merit was to read the world's history as a kind of Old Testament with himself for its Moses and Ezra.

Take him as a prophet in this kind, not a saint nor disciple of Christ, and the inquiry presents itself how he came *not* to be a Christian, and whether he held the creed of Moses with no difference or with any. To me he seems an arresting instance of what good and evil qualities were mingled in the Reformation, especially in that development of it which was created by Knox. He brings out the spirit of Scottish Calvinism under the influence of modern culture. He is a Puritan convert of Goethe ; and he shows where Calvinism is strong, where it must for ever be weak, and by what process the moral element in the Reformation is being transformed into an entirely novel substance, the religion, namely, of those who, discarding Christianity, would fain transcend it, not merely join the unbelieving multitude. The time has gone by when a Knox or a Luther could establish formal churches ; but Carlyle attempted a corresponding task, as great, though not so visibly great, as theirs. With justice has Mr. Froude likened him to the St. Paul of Protestant tradition. In the view of Protestants, Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Knox are the same type propagated through the ages, differing only in circumstances of time and place. Luther, addressing the Romans, would have written, they think, like the apostle of grace and election. St. Paul, in the presence of our sentimental religiosity, rose-water moralities, self-indul-

gence, and love of comfortable things, would scorn and smite them as energetically as did Carlyle, in language chosen for its power rather than its considerateness. Certainly Paul of Tarsus was no Attic rhetorician, no Plato of the scented and perfumed mythology with his delicate or piercing irony. He was a Hebrew, fervid, impetuous, unsparing; and even such, it is said, was the peasant's son from Annandale, a spiritual kinsman of St. Paul through the line of Knox and the Cameronians.

This may serve by way of analogy towards comprehending the man. He was strictly the offspring of Protestantism; to the day of his death a Cameronian he remained, the mood of rebellion and desert wildness strong within him. Wide as might be his culture, it was subordinate to a rugged spirit of fanaticism; from certain kinds of culture he held quite aloof. Physical science won small praise from him; with a curiously dazed look he admitted that he could not read the "Origin of Species" nor in the least attend to Darwin. Poetry he affected to despise; to Greek and Roman literature he dealt out somewhat of the contempt which divided earnest Reformers from Casaubon and Erasmus. The classics could not cure present evils. At the age of forty he learnt Greek from a crazy friend at Craigenputtock, but neither before nor after had his composition the sparkle of Hellenic light, or its mobile graceful airiness. How he judged the greatest of Athenians is well known. "Socrates," he said, "would have been terribly at ease in Zion." The earnest spirit must not descend to playfulness; it might indulge in the large wild humour of Luther's "Table Talk," but to Carlyle there seemed not earnestness enough in the Socratic irony. He himself had a demon-given faculty of laughter—laughter huge, untrained, unkempt like that of Norse gods, not by any means subdued to ideal Greek proportions. And he expended it on most things modern. He stood out as an iconoclast against the deities men worship; he would not wear their dress nor conform to their mode of speech. When Scotland broke with the medieval church, for well-nigh two centuries she seemed to have turned her back on civilisation. And this, the greatest of her sons after

Scott, hated the fine arts as the embodiment of irreligion, falsehood, and vice. He reminds us, not of the real Apostle, but of M. Renan's St. Paul, thirsting on his way to the Hill of Mars for the ruin of the "fair-faced marble gods." For he was chiefly an iconoclast, not a creator.

Carlyle, speaking of the "Hero as Poet," said that "all inmost things are melodious; naturally utter themselves in song"; and "see deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it." But as he had no eye for beauty of form, neither had he that secret of rhythm which makes the poet. Too often his utterances remind us of the jarring gates in Milton; they creak harsh discords, or rise to the painfulness of a scream. The creed of Calvin is all unmusical. That "inward harmony of coherence," which Carlyle attributes to the things of nature and reason, is alien to it; and no wonder. Under this feeling it was that the Puritan disciple of Goethe said again and again that he was not made for literature. Mr. Froude affirms, in like manner, that none of Carlyle's writings is a work of art except the "French Revolution," and perhaps the "Diamond Necklace"—the latter a vivid dramatic composition, mixed of burlesque and tragedy. It was the same consciousness acting in a different way that led Carlyle to think and write so much about Voltaire. The contrast indeed was piquant,—Voltaire, the most cunning craftsman of words ever seen; easy, smiling, nimble, turning about in his periods with unrivalled grace and fluency; uttering the bitterest things with such a charming air that his very enemies were not quite sure, till they saw all the world laughing at them, that Reynard meant mischief;—and Carlyle, nearly as awkward as his own Lord Protector, bursting with meaning, but, to borrow his favourite account of the man, inarticulate; dealing with words as his natural enemies; flaying, scourging, and otherwise torturing them until he had converted human speech into an unheard-of mannerism. Did he write English, Lowland Scotch, or a Babylonish jargon compounded out of his own head and Jean Paul? The origin of that strange dialect is at last known. Its savage energy came from his father, who

“did not need to swear, the commonest words in his mouth sounding awful.” Carlyle’s mother contributed the sarcasm, the laughter, and much of the picturesque imagery. But what a world must that have been which found its natural expression in Carlyle! The root, whether of strength or bitterness, was Cameronian, though Richter served as a model for the least conventional of styles.

It is a far cry from Ecclefechan to Geneva. But the “Latter-Day Pamphlets,” like “Sartor,” have that in them which takes us at once to the “Institutes” of Master John Calvin. As specimens of the religious teaching of Carlyle they may be described in Mr. Froude’s epigram: they are “Calvinism without its theology.” Here is the sum of our prophet’s lore. Now, though exhibited in terms of the New Testament, with the spirit or mind of Christ Genevan scholasticism had little to do. A shrewd observer might have foreseen three hundred years ago that where Christianity did not root out Calvinism, Calvinism would root out Christianity. There is no room for Christ or free-will in the philosophy which interprets human life on the principle of God’s absolute decrees irrespective of merit. Necessity is the tyrant’s plea; and the “Institutes” might be condensed to a single sentence—“He wills that can, therefore his will is just.” Everlasting harshness in the nature of God created harsh men and women to worship and reproduce it in their lives. It was of this God that James Mill told his infant son that “men had gone on adding trait after trait of malice and cruelty to the divine character until they had made their Creator a very demon, and then had turned round and bidden their children adore him.”

This Moloch of theology, at once an abstraction and a devouring idol, had his priests and altars in Scotland, England, and America; their history may be read at large in Buckle’s famous second volume. It was a sorry plight in which men found themselves on exchanging the “priests of Baal,” as they called the Roman clergy, for priests of such a Moloch. But when Hume published his “Essays” the world knew that the days of Calvin’s divinity were numbered. The only question was, would religion

perish with it? According to his temperament, a thinker might follow Hume into scepticism or "faint possible Theism" (which was an alternative Hume kept open); or he might retain the ethical fervour of his ancestors and become a Calvinist without theology. If he were a religious man, he might, while putting aside the Redemption, the Trinity, and all Christian dogmas, shrink even more from the light unbelief of Paris than from the teaching of the Elders. Accepting Hume's argument against miracles, and feeling that prayer itself, as demanding a miracle, was a sin against reason, could he not still hold by the infinitely sacred character of duty as a clue to the universe? This is what Carlyle did. Duty, he said, was the law of God.

Brought up in a stern household, Carlyle never knew the time when he was not under law; and, though the growing spirit of criticism made theology more and more problematic to him, the result could only be a new interpretation of the law of God, not a denial that the law of God existed. When Calvin spoke of God's will he implied, and explicitly affirmed it too, that man lay under a necessity against which all his strugglings availed nought. God's will was but a term borrowed from Christian theologians older than Calvin, to express the necessary concatenation of things in which creatures were immeshed, the antecedent fate that bound them fast. Free-will, on the other hand, was an empty name; for how could men be free against God? Now mark the consequence. From Calvin to Jonathan Edwards is a logical descent on which there is no pausing; down we must glide or run till we reach the undisguised fatalism of the New England divine. But it has not been observed, I think, that Jonathan Edwards, David Hume, and Stuart Mill are at one in their principles and differ only in the application. The necessary Divine decrees of the theologian are simply the physical laws to which Hume appealed as making miracles impossible; they are the laws of association which Mill substituted for *à priori* intuitions and axioms; they are the observed inviolable sequence to which scientific men trust when they scoff at the interference of a Divine Will in things. Strike out the word God and the conception

of personality from Calvinism, and what is left but the modern doctrine that the laws of nature can never be broken, and that they shape and govern the universe? A mind prepared by such cast-iron theology will readily close with a cast-iron philosophy; and this, whether he knew it or was too impatient to consider it, Carlyle did.

He held that Christianity as an historical religion was false. Why? Because its miracles, including the Incarnation, were impossible, and the Gospel story, therefore, a myth. And why were miracles impossible? He gave Hume's reason; he said, "it is mathematically demonstrable that they never happened." In other words, they did not happen because the constitution of things forbade it. Now this is a question for reason, or, if you please, for metaphysics; and what *is* mathematically demonstrable is this, that the possibility of miracles depends on whether in God there is Free Will or no. Granting that Free Will, no one can urge that the Infinite has not the *power* to interpose miraculously. It was God's Free Will that Hume, and after him Carlyle, could not admit. But when Free Will is denied, personality in the long run will be denied too. Thus might a pious Cameronian student be brought by his very theology to reject the Christian revelation and doubt whether there is any God save Eternal Power.

But he could not be an atheist, or stoop to the worship of matter and mechanism. When religion went out it left all things in darkness; a faint glimmer only was visible, or hardly visible, here and there among the deep shadows—a suspicion that the Hidden Cause was living, because greater than our minds, and good in ways unsearchable to us. Face to face with eternity, Carlyle felt rather than knew that it was not unreal like the dream-things that make up human life and its surroundings. Real it was, but silent; a mystery beyond words, an abyss out of which the phantoms rose incessantly, only that they might sink back into its depths and be swallowed up in oblivion. One of his deepest convictions was that time is an illusion; that it does not exist; that it is merely the form under which we view things otherwise not to be reached by us. Modern philosophy, as he

believed, had proved so much; and never had it achieved a greater triumph. But it could not tell, nor could he or any man, what that eternity is which time veils.

And then he cried out, "Is the Everlasting good or evil? Can it take pity on man, or heed his prayers?" The season came when he dreaded that it was evil and not good; that men dwelt in a Devil's Universe, and that all things were irretrievably flawed in their very nature. He thought lightly of Coleridge, who had but "skirted the howling wilderness of infidelity." His own experience went deeper. For seven years he dwelt in the shadow of the "Everlasting No" ("der Geist der stets verneint," as we read in Goethe), seeing within and without him evidence of ruin, pain, sorrow, sin, hideous disorder, hatred, malice, unreason, grim destructive irony; diabolic cunning that made only to unmake; and the Mystery of Evil disclosing itself as the Mother of the World. He has pictured these moods, these dark spiritual desolations, as no other man of the century could, with emphasis and reiteration and piled-up metaphor, and in a style as overpowering as the subject-matter, in "Sartor Resartus." Their influence is perceptible in all he wrote. He never beat down the temptation, now so familiar to the European mind, which whispers or shrieks aloud, "May not God be the Evil One?"

Call this Manichæism turned round, Ahriman made supreme, and Ormuzd his ineffective rival, and we shall have named the suspicion that haunted Carlyle, the ghost he could not lay. Calvinism has everywhere paved the way for Pessimism; being that very doctrine, I say, in theological garb. And what could a poor, storm-beaten soul do at the best but remember the gentler lesson it had also been taught, that Right is Right, and that Wrong, though never so victorious, cannot cease to be Wrong? When the unhappy Teufelsdröckh was in despair, he one day bethought himself that, after all, be his fortune what it might and the Eternal as malignant as he feared, he could and ought to bear it like a man. This he called his defiance to the Everlasting No. But was it deliverance? Not quite, I think. A half-deliverance, arriving at Stoicism, not reaching the tender confidence

of a child in his father. Teufelsdröckh knew of no father ; he might never have learnt the prayer in which we are bidden to call God our Father, and to ask with confidence that His will be done. How strange the language of heathen fortitude sounds on Christian lips : almost as strange as the language of desperation with which it alternates in "Sartor"! I know that such moods have been, and will be ; that they are exceedingly sad, and not to be dealt with harshly at all, being too often an inheritance against which a man must contend as against disease. But how dreadful the want of Christianity in the atmosphere that could nourish them ! Either Carlyle's mental vision was diseased, or things are all askew and in confusion. The former alternative implies only that Calvinism is false and Carlyle not an infallible teacher ; the latter would condemn us to lose heart and hope.

For myself, I had rather trust the nature of things than the greatest genius that ever lived. I cannot believe that reason prompts us to rebel against that nature as unjust and cruel. In these matters it is well to be quite clear on which side we mean to stand. Grounds there are in abundance for the strong sayings of Pessimism : nevertheless, there may be, and I hold that there are, much more solid grounds for refraining from strong sayings, and awaiting in patience and hope the coming on of a larger light. To the thoughtful mind it is perhaps not astonishing that man should know so little ; but astonishing in the highest degree that he should fancy his ignorance a justification for rebellious disdain and haughty unchastened discontent. The "Everlasting No" is utter unreason from the first. How, then, could a world in which reason held no sway endure for a moment ? Things *are* because they do not fall into contradiction with their own nature or with the nature of other things. In so far as they exist at all, they do so by conformity with reason, not in defiance of it. Mephistopheles himself could not exist if he denied his own powers and set them to destroy one another. Carlyle might have seen, had he chosen, that although death comes out of life, and life apparently out of death, it is the dictate of reason that life and not death is the origin of things ; that death

can originate nothing and is but a means to further ends, a secondary, instrumental, and subordinate phase in the universe, not the first or the last. He might have learnt from St. Paul the crowning, triumphant last word of the true doctrine, "Death is swallowed up in victory." There is no sound of Pessimism in that glorious cry.

From the "Everlasting No" Teufelsdröckh passed through the centre of Indifference, as he tells us, to the "Everlasting Yea."

This year (1825) (says Carlyle in his own person) I found that I had conquered all my scepticisms, agonising doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering mud-gods of my epoch; had escaped as from a worse than Tartarus, with all its Phlegethons and Stygian quagmires, and was emerging free in spirit into the eternal blue of ether, where, blessed be heaven! I have for the spiritual part ever since lived, looking down upon the welterings of my poor fellow-creatures, in such multitudes and millions still stuck in that fatal element; and have had no concern whatever in their Puseyisms, ritualisms, metaphysical controversies and cobwebberies, and no feeling of my own except honest silent pity for the religious or serious part of them, and occasional indignation, for the poor world's sake, at the frivolous secular and impious part, with their universal suffrages, their nigger emancipations, sluggard and scoundrel protection societies, and unexampled prosperity for the time being. What my pious joy and gratitude then was, let the pious soul figure.

This is a remarkable *Te Deum*, not easily to be paralleled in modern or ancient literature. What was the occasion of it? Had Carlyle been converted again to the Christian faith of his childhood? Not by any means. "Looking into the western radiance," he confessed on a memorable evening to his friend Irving that he could not think on these matters as Irving did; that he had ceased once and for all to be a dogmatic Christian. Had he then turned to the modern philosophers, and learned from them to believe nothing whatever but that fire burns and water quenches thirst and the brain is the man? Not that either, as he conceived. His old religion had been exchanged for a new, for one in accordance with nature and fact, not founded on imaginations or human tradition. A great deliverer had risen up for him. It was Goethe. The work, inspired

by genius, in which this wonderful new Gospel lay written, was a strange artistic novel called "Wilhelm Meister." "I then felt and still feel endlessly indebted to Goethe in the business," wrote Carlyle in the passage I began to quote above. The "Everlasting Yea" is therefore to be sought in Goethe.

I am not sure that it will soon be discovered by those that search. "Wilhelm Meister" is a production, as Goethe himself remarked, of an enigmatic character; the key to the riddle is nowhere indicated in its pages, and an ingenious commentator might derive thence, not one, but twenty "morals," each as justifiable as the other. Goethe delighted in parables, and Carlyle disdained formulas. Hence it may seem a hopeless task to construe the oracular responses of either. "The Highest," they both said, "cannot be spoken of in words." How else, then, are we to speak? In the Buddhist doctrine Nirvana must be experienced to be described, and is a secret to the unenlightened. It is a condition of the spirit which lies beyond whatever means of explanation language may afford. Such too is the "Everlasting Yea." It is the true Mysticism of which religious systems are shadows, forecasts, or reminiscences. But, in Carlyle's opinion, to know it is salvation, and the only cure for unbelief and misbelief. We ask in vain, however, whether it is intuition of the Infinite, devotion to a person, or absorption in Eternal Love. "This is life everlasting," said the Master of masters, "to know Thee, O Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Generation upon generation of Christians have found that word a reality. But what is the "Everlasting Yea?" Does it imply Optimism, the supremacy of spirit, the existence of objective and omnipotent Righteousness, or aught akin to these?

Carlyle, in the ninth chapter of "Sartor Resartus," coming to the very point where he must unfold a clear and definite meaning "to the profane reader," declines to do so, on the plea that Teufelsdröckh is not only mystical but whimsical. He might perhaps have remembered that while criticism is by its nature ironical, and may indulge in satire, prophetic teaching has too serious a task to

confuse its speech with laughter. Did his heart misgive him lest, when he began to explain, it should appear that he was rehearsing elementary precepts of the Christian as indeed of every religion? What, for example, is the difficulty in believing that we "must do the duty that is nearest us"? The difficulty lies in doing it, not in believing that we ought. Or was it a novel truth, to be discerned only by the great genius of Goethe, that in every real thing, how mean and paltry soever, there is an ideal element which the conscientious man will disengage and make his own? Carlyle comes nearer the central mystery when he declares that man has another end than "happiness"; and nearer still when he speaks of the universe as "not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike and my Father's"; when he cries out, "with other eyes, too, could I now look on my fellow-men; with an infinite love, an infinite pity." And he comes nearest of all when he concludes in these words: "Even for his sufferings and his sins I now first named man my Brother. Thus was I standing in the porch of that *Sanctuary of Sorrow*; by strange, steep ways had I too been guided hither; and ere long its sacred gates would open, and the Divine Depth of Sorrow lie disclosed to me."

These things do not reflect the colour of a theology founded on election and reprobation as Calvin had established it. From Goethe it was, as Carlyle believed, that he had learned so humane and touching a creed. Was it really so? one asks in amaze. Had he never read or meditated upon the New Testament, or grasped its significance till light broke on him from one or two chance pages of "*Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre*," where these things are obscurely written? It is hard to believe that neither from father nor mother had this Christian child and man heard the doctrine of the Cross; or that, on the other hand, his chief or only teacher when he would understand how renunciation, *Entsagen*, is the secret of beatitude, was Goethe with his lines in "*Faust*," which are no more than a musical echo of a thousand years' preaching in European pulpits. Such a thought strikes one as strange and fantastical. What meaning

may lurk in it we will ask by-and-by, when we have ascertained what meaning Carlyle sifted out of it and was determined never to allow.

In a significant paragraph Mr. Froude makes Carlyle prophesy that there was no hope for England except in a recovered sense of religion. "But *what* religion?" he enquires.

He did not think it possible that educated honest men could even profess much longer to believe in historical Christianity. He had been reading the Bible. Half of it seemed to be inspired truth, half of it human illusion. "The prophet says, Thus saith the Lord. Yes, sir, but how if it be not the Lord, but only you who take your own fancies for the word of the Lord?" I spoke to him of what he had done himself. Then as always he thought little of it, but he said: "They must come to something like that if any more good is to grow out of them." Scientific accountings for the moral sense were all moonshine. Right and wrong in all things, great and small, had been ruled eternally by the Power that made us.

This going out from historical Christianity he called in his figurative way the "Exodus from Houndsditch." For some years he had it in mind to write a book under that title, enforcing the conclusion that no honest man can sincerely accept as facts what are called facts in the Bible. Mr. Froude says for himself, and on behalf of his hero, that after the revolution in astronomy which dislodged the earth from its place as the fixed centre of the universe, another revolution was inevitable, that which in his opinion has reduced the New Testament to mythology, and made belief in a real Incarnation or Resurrection impossible. He has published in these volumes an unfinished paper of Carlyle's, intended to bring out his views, called "Spiritual Optics." Its whole point is that Christianity falls with the Ptolemaic system of the heavens. About this there can be no mistake. Carlyle was emphatically not an orthodox Christian—nay, not a member of any one of the *religiones licitæ*. He entered no church and submitted to no ordinance. The old Hebrew stars, he says, in a savage outburst in his "Life of Sterling," were fast growing dim and would soon be quenched. If men desired to keep their Christian creeds a little longer, they must be careful to handle them

tenderly. "Your rusty kettle," said he, speaking of the Church of England, "will continue to boil your water for you if you don't try to mend it. Begin tinkering, and there is an end of your kettle." He used the same contemptuous metaphor of the Roman Church on the first page of his "Latter-Day Pamphlets," at a time when idle tongues chattered about Pius IX. as designing to furnish forth a new Catholicism. Nor did he ever lose his conviction that the body of Christian belief was perishing; the question not yet decided, he thought, was whether the soul of that belief would perish too, or would survive in other forms. Certain it was to him that the nineteenth century, like young Mirabeau, had swallowed (or was sure in no long time to swallow) all formulas, including the Apostles' Creed. He did not deny that his own writings had helped on this consummation. For years, as we have seen, he thought of helping it still further and with more direct aim by publishing his reasons for an "Exodus from Houndsditch." Whatever his deliverance from the "Everlasting No," it was at least this, a rejection of the facts which have made Christianity something more than a sentiment or a philosophy, and have given it power to change the world. Carlyle disliked Strauss, and spoke of Renan with loathing; but in the sum of the matter he cannot have been at issue with them. Their Christ was a myth, and so was his. True as the Religion of Sorrow appeared in his eyes, Christianity was but a passing form of it, subject, like all forms, to the Time-Spirit.

To this extent he agreed with and appreciated Voltaire :

Sufficiently (he makes his Professor cry out to him) hast thou demonstrated this proposition, considerable or otherwise : that the Mythos of the Christian Religion looks not in the eighteenth century as it did in the eighth. Alas ! were thy six-and-thirty quartos and folios, and six-and-thirty thousand other quartos and folios, and flying sheets or reams printed before and since on the same subject, all needed to convince us of so little ? But what next ? Wilt thou help us to embody the divine Spirit of that religion in a new Mythos, in a new vehicle and vesture, that our souls, otherwise too like perishing, may live ? Why, thou hast no faculty in that kind ! Only a torch for burning, no hammer for building ? Take our thanks then, and—thyself away.

We must, therefore, it would seem, investigate the matter on the clear understanding that, whatever he believed, historical Christianity to Carlyle was a convicted falsehood. Its fabric, both real and supernatural, had melted before his eyes into air, "into thin air." But are we instantly condemned, he asks, to live with no religion to guide or console us? Is there no fact left, at once natural and supernatural, solid beyond the possibility of doubt, immense and infinite and sacred? There is a fact left, answers Carlyle: the universe with the Power that rules it. We have but to open our eyes, and we shall behold such a spectacle as will strike us dumb with awe and astonishment, with a deep sense of our dependence, of our infinite littleness and the infinite greatness lying all around. If nature is not God, yet is it the very "garment of God," woven in the roaring loom of time; whatsoever is true in our systems—whether religious, social, political, or any other—has come out of the great first fact, "demonic-celestial," and rests upon it as an unassailable foundation. The "Divine Idea of the World"—that is our seer's definition of the "Everlasting Yea," as it was also Fichte's, to whom he is indebted for its naming. It is an "Idea,"—by which he cannot but mean that thought creative and infinite has shaped all phenomena, and is their only stay.

Scepticism, then, must be a disease, for it is blind to this great truth which ought everywhere to be discerned, the essential reason, or intelligence and intelligibleness of things; and Materialism is, if possible, falser, degrading as it does the ineffable to slime and gas, deluding itself with the notion that it is the printing-press which composes the poem and not the poet. Our salvation lies in recognising this first of truths, that the world and its laws are no sham, but a reality; real because it exists in and through reason, and is deeper and higher than any sense of sight or hearing can attain to. The universe is not mere dirt, as the eighteenth century dreamt; it is life and reason. "I should go distracted," said Carlyle to Professor Tyndall, "if I were not sure that intellect is at the heart of things." The like assurance is repeated in many different forms by Mr. Froude; it is enforced with

every variety of symbol and argument in the great essay on "Characteristics," the most profound and philosophical, to my thinking, that Carlyle ever published. Not a dogmatic Christian, but not a sceptic or materialist either ; what was he, then, after all ?

I am not sure that the prophet himself knew, or that any one can tell, further than I have said. The question turns on this : what meaning was there in Carlyle's mind when he not only spoke of the " Idea of the World," but called that idea Divine ? At times he did wish and even struggle to believe that the Power which upholds all things is righteous and benignant, the Father Everlasting. But to keep such a belief unclouded was in the highest degree difficult for a man whose temperament predisposed him to melancholy, and whose bringing up had impressed him with a conviction that God was not so much a tender Father as a stern, unforgiving Judge. Calvinistic instincts were not to be conquered by apologists proving " benevolence " from the marks of design. With hasty and, as I think, unreasonable scorn Carlyle flung from him the whole company of well-meaning, sensible writers who had walked in the footsteps of Paley. They too were mechanical and at bottom atheistic. He demanded not proofs resting on careful evidence, but an intuition clear and broad as sunshine, to make him see that all things are exceedingly good. Strive as he might to believe it, he never did, either for himself or for others. Once and again in most moving terms he speaks as though a particular Providence were still conceivable ; he seems persuaded that every man coming into this world has a task to perform ; but his trouble returns and he cannot rest. Like all great men, he was confident that a path had been traced out for him in which he must walk, a goal at which sooner or later he must arrive ; he believed, or rather he hoped against hope, that his life would not be in vain. Consistently to hold this is given to few ; it is belief in God made practical and the creed of every hour ; nor can I suppose that Carlyle attained—for it is clear that he did not attain—to the high serenity which would have banished doubts for ever. The silence of things appalled him ; his heart broke at the apparent indifference of the Hidden God to the ways of

His creatures. Mr. Froude saying to him one day that he could believe only in a God whose existence was manifest by what He did, Carlyle with a cry of despair answered, "He does nothing!" It was without reason or against reason, as he said, that he kept on believing in Providence rather than destiny.

How plainly in that saying do we perceive the modern, which is here the Christian, thought striving to get its wings free from Calvinism! "Destiny!" said the Elders, with their frowning visages as of judges set to condemn mankind. "A benevolent Providence!" said the "rose-water school," too lightly handling the greatest of Christian principles, as they began to reform political institutions and restore the golden age. Carlyle did not think that they could restore the golden age; he laughed Mazzini and the disciples of Rousseau out of countenance. In the future he had little faith. As years went on he became more and more anxious that standing forms, nay, formulas, should be allowed to last their time. What could he set up instead of them? His "Providence" seemed chiefly intent on setting fire to the world's four corners; things were rushing down to swift destruction, and men were infatuated. The old religions were dead; neither was there a possibility of a new one for centuries to come. The conclusion of his thoughts was no more definite or encouraging than that of "Candide" or "Rasselas." But in moral earnestness, though not in moral dignity, he was almost Johnson's equal, and it is saying little to affirm that he infinitely surpassed Voltaire.

Such, I am convinced, is the only adequate explanation of Carlyle's sadness, which, always recurring, and relieved by no change of sky, by no success or growth of literary fame, must often have appeared as affectation, if not simple ill-humour, to the world at large. There is an inward vision upon which the tranquillity of the spirit rests, and when it fades into darkness a man must needs show to his friends a gloomy countenance. The sadness of life in Protestant nations is proverbial; in Scotland it was for a long while oppressive. Nor does it change with latitude. If the soul abides in a spiritual desert it cannot but taste of its bitterness; and where shall we find so great a desolation

as that of the fanatical or foredoomed Puritan, whose rage has made an end of ordinances, symbols, and lovely forms, and, when all else is destroyed, preys upon itself for want of sustenance? Contrast the golden background of Frà Angelico's world or that of St. Francis with the infinite grey mists wherein Carlyle wandered so many days alone. He has contrasted them himself in "Heroes and Hero Worship" and in "Past and Present." Epochs of belief, he says, are fruitful, heroic, and joyous; epochs of unbelief ineffective, languid, cowardly, filled with sadness. He knew as much as history could tell him, and no one will say that he was wrong. His lament over vanished Catholicism is very touching, the more so that it needed extraordinary sweetness and beauty to melt his Puritan heart as it contemplated that which he had ever deemed idolatry. For himself, he lived in an epoch of unbelief. He maintained that there was still joy for a good man communing with the Good Spirit, though solitary; but he lay under a heavy burden, and could only repeat, "Let us be sincere, at any rate; let us not pretend that we see things when we do not see them." What were the things he could not see? God's infinite goodness, the soul's immortality, the final triumph of the Right? Yes; though he affirmed that history is the true Bible and that a lie will not endure for ever, he still did not know or understand that the power which chastises nations and overthrows falsehood is Good, is not merely Evil committing suicide in fire and anguish. The Reformation and the Revolution, which he plainly perceived to be acts in one awful tragedy, were to him "Truth clad in hell-fire"; destroy they could and did—they built up nothing. So it was in the universe. God was the Destroyer.

If we sum up the ideas that constitute revealed religion, we shall be led to the conclusion that there are three, everywhere combined but distinguishable—the idea of Power, the idea of Righteousness, and the idea of Love. The mode of each is infinite; and I need hardly remark that to reconcile them in one consistent theory is beyond human reason; for these in their distinction and oneness are analogues of the mysterious Trinity. Now it is possible to conceive of the scheme of things in the light of

each idea as of all; but likewise to view it under eclipse, so to speak, of one or the other. Carlyle felt and worshipped the infinite Power; he knew that it could not be the instrumental thing we call matter—for what can matter do of itself? But only in occasional flashes could he behold things in the light of Righteousness or Love; his pencil painted only nocturnes, dim starry skies from which the sun was absent. When he came to doubt of Christ the darkness fell; henceforth God was indeed might and majesty, but His mercy and righteousness sank out of sight as into fathomless deeps. It was almost the realisation of Richter's dream. "Children," the dead Christ mournfully exclaimed, "ye have no Father." "He does nothing," said Carlyle. And truly, if Christ came not from God, He has done nothing. A sad conclusion, and a reason for endless sadness.

But still he comforted himself with the assurance that thought does not perish, that duty is sacred, that men are brethren. There was somehow, as Fichte expressed it, a Divine Idea at the bottom of appearances. This, though not all the truth men live by, is assuredly true; it is firm ground on which to build as we can. It will bring salvation to a world wherein only lower truths have been, this long while, acted upon. Edinburgh, London, and Paris have fine things to show; they prate day and night of their astonishing progress. Progress in what and to what? asks Carlyle. There was progress at the French Revolution, when many lies were burnt up; but what kind is this, he continues, which denies with emphasis on six days of the week a creed it sleepily recites on the seventh? Is there any Atheism comparable to the Atheism of riches, self-indulgence, aristocratic idleness, and the enslaving of mankind to serve a few masters no better than the first men taken at chance in Piccadilly? Of a surety there is that in the universe, call it God or Devil, which will judge these things and make an end of them.

Carlyle's heart-stricken doubts were by no means of one colour with an indifference to eternity; they came out of his dread of eternity. Doubt as he might, his ingrained moral sense told him that the world of no

religion was doomed to perish everlastingly. And he spoke with the strength of belief and of a mighty genius. The Eternal he knew was at least Divine enough to smite wickedness with a sword of lightning. For a long half-century this preacher of a new Apocalypse walked the streets of modern cities, crying in essays, histories, and lectures, "Yet forty days, and London, New York, Glasgow, Paris, all the homes of industry and palaces of art, shall be destroyed." From the scaffolds of the Convention, from Napoleon's battlefields, from the three days of July, and the yet more sanguinary days of June, from the discovery of petroleum and dynamite, he drew auguries now in course of fulfilment which portended the approaching collapse of European civilisation. What had been done in France would come to pass everywhere; the old order was worn out and rotten; it was dying, and nothing could save it. The whirlwind of democracy that came up blackening the sky was driving before it like autumn leaves dynasties, thrones, and sceptres—yea, the symbols of ancient things yet more august; for it was Christianity itself that seemed to be vanishing away. What fools, then, were heaping up treasure in the universal wreck? Could men go on spending their lives in hoarding money, or enjoying it, and not begin even now to think of that amendment of the heart without which they were but phantoms in human shape, not brothers or fellow-helpers, or believers in God?

Into the vitals of England, if of any nation whatever, corruption was eating; Mammon, adored of Britons, was a still more detestable deity than the French god Belial—Mammon, "the least erected spirit that fell." In 1827 the Revolution had hardly crossed the Channel; German thought, known to De Quincey and Coleridge, was to most Englishmen no more than a name for the inscrutable. Catholic Emancipation, the repeal of the corn laws, reform and education bills, were yet to come, if they could prove their claim to existence. Philosophy and literature boasted of the *Edinburgh Review* as their organ, and Macaulay was announced as likely to become the greatest of living Englishmen. As for the Church of England, charitable persons were saying, "She is not dead, but

sleepeth," a sleep bolstered up with tithes and worldly decencies, but very doubtful of the resurrection. What could Radicalism, with its political nostrums, do for the inward corruption of which these things were a token? There was need of a very different sort of reform first. Atheism must be abolished, and a return made to belief in the living omnipotent God. Life, and religion itself, were governed by conventions which none questioned, but not one in ten thousand held sacred in his heart. Insincerity, cant, and luxury were so common that it was a breach of manners to show your contempt for them. What Englishmen *said* they believed in was the next world; what they certainly did believe in was the present, with a Pig Philosophy to explain it. They had an immense reverence for clothes—the symbol is taken from Swift's wild and often unspeakable "Tale of a Tub"—clothes, especially the old clothes of morality, art, and revelation they worshipped with no less trembling than the Fijian prostrate before his fetish. But they had forgotten God, and they knew nothing of man as God made him. What then were they but wretched simulacra given over to love and to make lies?

This teaching many heard with amaze and indignation. Was not England the most Christian of countries? But some few, when they heard it, understood; nor were these always Christians. It was a great awakening for young men here and there. To go back to conscience, to live by what they believed, to speak no falsehood, to fulfil the daily task like men to whom work is a sacrament, this was the beginning of a steady effort on the part of individuals towards perfection, and it has borne abundant fruit. Would it had borne more! It was an elementary but a true gospel. If, after nearly sixty years, it had accomplished so little, the reason lay deeper than Carlyle knew. The great shock, which was to convulse England, has not come; it has been broken into many minor shocks. A pacific revolution has taken place. German thought is at home among us; all the world has been emancipated faster than Carlyle desired; education will soon be universal, and the jaunty philosophies of 1827 have yielded before an earnest painful search after truth.

But Mammon reigns supreme, and luxury has grown at an unexampled rate. The rich and the poor stand farther aloof than they did before the Reform Bill. For much beneficial change Carlyle's writings must answer; but also for some of the quiet conviction with which it is now believed in many quarters that Christianity is a thing of the past. Carlyle has acted and reacted on all sections of public opinion; he has helped unbelievers to be more unbelieving; he has roused Christians to earnestness. The effects of the tremendous force that lay in him are complicated and incalculable.

No writer whose principle was revolt from the moral law has ever greatly influenced Englishmen. They look for a certain elevation of character, and an ethical gravity in their teachers, such as no one can mistake in Milton, and only the dim-sighted will fail to acknowledge in Shakespeare. If we compare Goethe, Carlyle, and Victor Hugo—the three conspicuous oracles of their century—we shall observe at once how much Carlyle exceeds the other two in strength of moral fibre. Goethe was an artist, and has so refined his morality that to the common eye it is almost invisible. Victor Hugo, intoxicated with his own imagination and the spirit of the age, parades a sentimental tenderness for right-doing, but is in fact the champion of a monstrous love and pity, which contrive to be melting and compassionate nearly always at the wrong time. He has as much morality as Rousseau, and no more. Of this vein some traces may be found in Carlyle too; he is full of pity when he reflects, and, like Rousseau, he was wretched and suspicious however things fell out. But he held fast by the creed of retributive justice; and the English public has submitted in every age to be rebuked by its great teachers. Righteous indignation is a constant chord in the many-toned instrument of our literature. Swift and Pope and Cowper represent the tradition of the eighteenth century; Byron and Shelley, Carlyle and Ruskin and Matthew Arnold continue it down to our day; they have been the successors in this high moral tribunal of the authors of "Gulliver," the "Dunciad," and "The Task."

Of the modern group, Carlyle is incomparably the

strongest. Brought up as he was, all his antecedents fitted him to be a sort of Hercules Furens, armed with a brazen mace that shivered his opponents to atoms. He had the power though not the grace of a finished student; he inherited an untamed energy, accustomed to do battle for its beliefs and to mock at civilities. Chivalrous he hardly ever was; only at most compassionate. Moral conviction intensified by peasant obstinacy, unsparing sarcasm, humour so whimsical that it surprises us at every turn, passionate rage and sadness, and a poet's felicity in striking out figures, names, and visible characteristics—and all this brought to bear on themes of the day—what a large equipment was here, and how sure to be effective in the long run! It will not be pretended that Carlyle has written anything so deeply conceived as "Gulliver," and he would have been the first to own that there is a delicate, sparkling mischief in Sterne which he could not come near. But for broad Hogarthian humour he has no equal, and his single strokes are miraculous.

There is nothing he speaks of but he sees it before him; to the reader he makes things solid as well as visible. "He has a stereoscopic talent," it was said, when stereoscopes came in. Such a master of word-painting there never was in English literature. Carlyle's was a Dantean gift, which implied a most deliberative searching gaze with the eyes of flesh as of the spirit. He studied faces, hands, attitude, gesture, expression, as though his sole purpose had been to exhibit a man's outward bearing, his clothes rather than his thought. In this province, which may be called portrait-painting for books, he did marvellous things, though not the finest. He painted better than he drew; deep shadow, intense and lurid colour, fascinated him. But he seemed incapable of giving the middle scale or any half-tones of mixed and varied harmony, and he could draw no straight lines; there is probably not a figure in all his books but has a touch of the grotesque. That enormous "flame-picture," the "French Revolution," is such an exhibition of the visual faculty in writing as certainly no other man but the Florentine could have attempted. It is an Apocalypse, "written in fire and tears." But who will believe that Mirabeau, Danton,

Robespierre, or Marat were exactly such as Carlyle's imagination bodied forth? He was always studying the French character. I am by no means sure that he has ever faithfully reproduced it. In like manner his "Frederick" is a comedy of humours, not a bare history, and not always true.

But what he did see he saw with the utmost clearness: his defective drawing and want of half-tones were due to the fact that what he did not see he ignored; for him it did not exist. Sarcasm is a fatal hindrance to understanding; humour, which Carlyle thought the most godlike of qualities, is well known to be a faculty of exaggerating or diminishing according to the bent of our feelings; it is allied to caricature, and gives the mood of the spectator much more than the reality of the scene. Humour interprets, but in its own dialect. It seizes on the strange, abnormal, and picturesque as a clue to the real. But the real is not always picturesque; and its strangeness may be compatible with a most unsuspecting commonplace look. Carlyle's accuracy of description, where humour did not warp it, is beyond all praise; witness his German battlefields, his vivid, faithful sketches of the countries through which he travelled. It is when he comes to delineate men and women, especially in action, that he gives the impression of viewing them through an artificial medium. As M. Renan says finely of St. Paul, *un mot l'obsède*; no sooner has he caught a glimpse of his hero than he fastens an epithet upon him, and henceforth Robespierre is "sea-green," as in Homer Achilles, whether asleep or carving a joint, is "swift-footed." Carlyle, in spite of his genius, thus becomes conventional; he falls into a manner and condemns himself to view persons as if they did not grow or change. Does any one remember an instance of his dwelling on the development of character, or showing it in its various stages? I do not. His personages are not merely consistent; they are monotonous. I should think that there never was an author of equal rank who so indulged in repetition. Carlyle fashions ideas as a smith makes a piece of iron into a horseshoe, by repeated and, in his case, rather furious, blows of a hammer. Twenty times in a page he will strike the same

nail on the head ; or, to change the metaphor, when he has shouted a thought till he can shout no longer, he will whisper it, sob over it, laugh at it ; he will pray, beseech, and anathematise his audience, and when he has recovered breath will shout again as though he had uttered no syllable. A page of Carlyle's seems to shriek at the reader in a frenzy of moral indignation ; one is not surprised on hearing that the author described himself as composing in a "mental paroxysm," and his books as written with his heart's blood.

The consequence of which was that Carlyle became the most effective preacher of the century. He was endowed with the fire and fancy, the wealth of words, unwavering convictions, and genius of repetition which make a great preacher. He addressed the imagination ; with his adversaries he never reasoned, but took it for granted that they were wrong and he altogether and always in the right. Add to this that, like Aristophanes and the Old Comedy, he held it lawful to satirise evil principles in the persons of those possessed by them ; good-breeding with him meant speaking the unvarnished truth, or what he took for such ; it meant tearing off the exquisite raiment worn by public men and showing them to the world as they were, poor and blind and naked, and immeasurably contemptible. He would have loved that petition in the first Edwardine Prayer-book, "Lord, grant me to tell my neighbours their faults, without dissimulation." At the touch of his disenchanting wand London society became the palace of truth ; he felt privileged to tell every man the secret that he was an ass ; and that not in jest, but with a sober seriousness that must have carried conviction to many an unlucky wight himself. Carlyle indeed, though peculiar and fanciful, saw a great way into men ; his literary "condemnations with costs" will not all stand ; but they often will ; and a more austere age than the present will probably acknowledge that the celebrities whom Carlyle met in London fifty or sixty years ago were much more like what he thought them than what they thought themselves. One or other illustrious exception must of course be made ; but when all things are

reckoned, the question is not so much whether Carlyle was out in his estimate as whether he did not show a want of human feeling, and occasionally of gratitude, in manifesting his opinions. On this point the world is pretty well agreed. The sage of Chelsea was too miserable himself to be always mindful of others. God's world did not content him; and the world of men and women roused his contempt as being, in the words he has somewhere quoted from Swift, "a pickle-herring tragedy, which is the worst of farces."

He considered his own teaching in the light of an "introduction to Goethe," or a noviciate for such as would be disciples of that wisest of moderns. But Carlyle was a difficult novice-master. He kindled a fury and a distress in the heart which Goethe would not soon have allayed; his lightning scorched and blackened, making it a task of years for sun and rain to bring back fertility to the barren land. As Arthur Clough bitterly and not untruly expressed it, Carlyle "led men into the wilderness and left them there." He never seriously attempted to explain in what the message of Goethe consisted. Nor did he rise to the height of Goethe's idea. If anything is certain, it is that Goethe, dismissing the problems of eternity as Christians picture it, desired to make of life an *art*, whereby all the elements of the world may be brought into concord. Eternity and time, he said, were one; God was the universal order, living, progressive, fruitful: religion consisted in shaping one's conduct as a part of the cosmic law. The end of education, when it became culture (which is the education given by a true knowledge of life), was the formation of a definite, self-balanced character, depending on itself, independent of every other. The humble penitent attitude of a Christian towards his Maker, the closer walk with God in which saints have found their happiness, were to be exchanged for a conscientious loyalty to the laws of science, understood by Goethe in no narrow physical sense, and for delight in working artistically within the limits prescribed by nature. Immortality and a future life are not governing elements in the theory of Goethe. He refuses before all things to be "transcendental"; by which he means

going out of the world of reality which we can grasp with senses and intellect. If God is not the world, we know God, he thinks, only in the world. Spinoza appeared the most enlightened of philosophers to him; and his own religion was nearer akin to Pantheism than to Christian Theism, for it tended to resolve the personality of God into unconscious though all-pervading Reason. It recognised as supreme the Ideal, but not the Eternal Consciousness.

Carlyle, I say, may have striven to reach this idea, which, inadequate and even false though it be, compared with Christianity, has a wonderful calm and beauty in it; but he never did. There was too little in common between Teufelsdröckh's stormy thought and the "System of Ethics," perhaps the most passionless book that was ever written. And the Goethe of mature life would have criticised "Sartor Resartus" as belonging to that period of storm and stress which his own more radiant genius, as sunny almost as Shakespeare's, had brought to an end. "Sartor Resartus" is only the sorrows of Werther in trouble about religion instead of about love. It is an outcry and a protest, not a creative doctrine. But much beyond "Sartor Resartus" Carlyle never went. He spent his life in storm and agony. The terrors of death encompassed him. Goethe's absolute trust in science, his enthusiasm for art, his serene poetry, tell of a region lying high and glorious, which the clouds of this earthly life would not suffer Carlyle to behold. He disparaged science, but feared that it might stumble on some dreadful truth and justify Atheism. Art in every shape, how beautiful soever, as we have said, he scorned. True art he felt was the outward symbol of belief; it could neither be created where religion was not, nor survive when religion had become extinct. I do not know how he accounted for the great achievements of Goethe, who was neither Greek nor Roman nor Christian; but perhaps he saw in them a prophecy of religion yet to be. For himself he professed no art in his compositions; neither did he think he knew more than the elements of that dimly guessed-at worship which was to succeed the old. He moved behind Goethe, not in the same line with

him. For art is indeed of one substance with religion, as religion, when it attains any degree of development, is a kind of art, but spiritual and having its roots in the soul. When, therefore, Carlyle disowned art, he was cutting himself off from the source to which his German master owed all he knew; and he was making the breach infinitely wider than there was need between Christianity and that future to which he aspired.

But he must have felt that no Goethe would suffice for the new creation. It was a frequent saying of his that the saints were the best men he knew; that a peasant saint would be of more consequence in Europe to-day than all its fleets and armies; and that the divinest symbol was still "the peasant of Galilee," by whom had been bequeathed to us the Religion of Sorrow. Carlyle dwelt far from the Catholic Church. When its accents smote upon his ear in the cathedral at Bruges, he could but mutter that it was "grand idolatrous music." Yet he confessed to Mr. Froude that the Mass was the only genuine relic of religious worship left among us. A suggestive word, deserving of our deepest meditation! Whilst he said of Agnosticism that it offered us "ground glass under the guise of finest wheaten flour," and of Atheism that it was the "Everlasting No"; whilst he quoted with approval that dictum of Novalis, that "my belief becomes indefinitely more certain to me as soon as another shares it," and affirmed again and again that men must have a religion, nay, a church, or go to destruction,—it is wonderful that he did not seriously ask himself whether any pattern of holy living, to be hoped for in the future, can do for us that which Jesus Christ has left undone.

Is a founder of religion conceivable who can go beyond the law of the Beatitudes? Is not Christianity, as exhibited in Christ, a religion not only of sorrow but of help? Carlyle has said that its symbols have an infinite significance: is not this much the same as admitting that their significance is absolute, is eternal? The sacred symbols he has in view are not sacraments only; he means the Incarnation as well. With all this Calvin had truly nothing to do. The Incarnation

is the inheritance of that mediæval church from which Calvin revolted. The whole Catholic edifice is built on it. This was the "mystery of godliness" which Carlyle could not receive, and would not teach. If his lifelong unrest, his dissatisfaction with the present, his despairing outlook towards the future, prove anything, they prove to my mind that one doctrine which has shaped the fortunes and moulded the great and subduing ritual,—which has created the spiritual axioms, and called out the undying moral power of the Christian Church; they prove that there is only one form of religion or revelation adapted to the needs, as it has been foretold by the aspirations of every son of Adam—the entirely human and therefore unspeakably Divine form in which Power, Righteousness, and Mercy, incarnate in the nature of man, tell him of the Eternity he cannot as yet behold, and enable him, by the might of a most gentle grace, to transcend the shadows of Time. That, and no other, is the "Everlasting Yea"; it is the only principle which can fulfil the great saying of Butler, "If conscience had power as it has authority, it would rule the world."

IV

AN APOSTLE OF NIRVANA: H. F. AMIEL

IT is not often that a name has been added to European literature in a single day, and on the appearance of a work which could have no successor. Yet this, or something not unlike it, has been the strange fortune of Henri Frédéric Amiel. Living and teaching at Geneva for over thirty years, he was known indeed to such men as M. Naville, M. Cherbuliez, M. Edmond Scherer, whose reputation might have excited his envy, and whose influence would have opened for him a pathway to success had he chosen it. To mere acquaintance he seemed a dry and formal pedant. He encouraged no intimacies, took no conspicuous part in society around him, and was never married. He would put into print an occasional essay, of which the finished form did not make atonement for the lack of substance; it was but elegant trifling. Trifling, too, seemed the minute care which he bestowed on his renderings, line for line and word for word, from Schiller and Goethe. His book of poems—"Grain de Mil," and "Penseroso"—had a touch of the over-daintiness which in Théophile Gautier's "Emaux et Camées," as in Théodore de Banville's crystalline verses, may be redeemed by the light of genius that shines through them; but Amiel's genius was hardly proved by these feats of verse-making. His friends were disappointed, and told him so. He was born, said Edmond Scherer, for higher things. Apparently he never achieved them. He died and made no sign. Then his "Journal Intime" was found; and Amiel ascended, as by one stroke of his wings, into that "heaven of invention" where he is destined perhaps to a place with the immortals,

among his brethren of an austere and perplexing school; Senancour, René, Leopardi—and must we not name Pascal?—who, for ever apart and for ever akin to each other, sit brooding, with terror-haunted thoughts, upon the—

towers of dread foundation laid
Under the grave of things.

Amiel, like those to whom I have compared him, is a type of disease. He may be described almost in the words which George Sand applies to Obermann: “*Mystérieux, rêveur, incertain, tristement railleur, peureux par irrésolution, amer par vertu, il a peut-être une parentée éloignée avec Hamlet, ce type embrouillé mais profond de la faiblesse humaine, si complet dans son avortement, si logique dans son inconséquence.*” The malady which he has depicted in himself deserves our closest study, for it has infected the time. As some have risked their lives in physical experiments for the attainment of fresh knowledge, so Amiel, and innumerable others, have made ventures in the realm of spirit; and his record of forty years’ meditations holds the quintessence of what is known as modern thought, dissolving it neither into a metaphysics unacquainted with life, nor into a criticism exultant over the ruin it has made. Its author united the sharpest logic with a tender religious enthusiasm. He cared for science, politics, letters, music. He felt, and has vividly rendered, all the influences of that majestic Alpine scenery which lay so near. Though he walked the streets of Geneva like a ghost, there was no mood of thought or feeling beyond his interpretation. He could be utterly objective; he could “see with the eyes of every one,” nor is it too much to assert that he saw with all the eyes of the nineteenth century. In spirit he could be and do everything. Yet in fact he did nothing.

What is the explanation of so strange an enigma?

It is this, I think: Amiel had the maximum of culture with the minimum of character. He was wanting in power of will, and therefore in that faith which cannot exist unless it be strongly willed. His defects were those of the age; and herein, as I conceive, lies an argument for that Christian view of the nature and duty of religious

belief which the age is casting out. No one, so far as I know, has dwelt upon it; and, though Amiel's text has found a crowd of readers, and he himself has figured in romance,—need I mention the doubting lover in “Robert Elsmere”?—there is yet room for a commentary which shall indicate its drift or its moral.

His life is easily told. He was born at Geneva in 1821; spent an unhappy childhood; travelled between his twentieth and twenty-third year through France and Italy; and passed the next five years at Heidelberg and Berlin, studying metaphysics and making acquaintance with men of renown, poets, artists, historians, and the celebrities of science. In his *Journal* of March 26th, 1851, he sets down the famous men, now dead, whom he had known. Among them were Steffens, the Norse disciple of Schelling; Marheineke, the Hegelian: the devout Neander, Oersted, Oehlenschläger, Thorwaldsen, and Felix Mendelssohn—a goodly fellowship. He made no mark in their company, but the days at Berlin were the happiest of his life. They came after a melancholy youth, and their charm grew in the retrospect as one by one the promises of riper years turned to dust and ashes. By-and-by he writes that during his course of philosophy he had been living “the eternal life,” which for him was full of contemplative moods, self-contained passion, and “the unspeakable tenderness of a love without stint or measure.” These were the golden days of the noviciate, radiant and free, a little tinged with the sentimentalism which is apt to flush a young philosopher's musings. What Amiel gained from them his *Journal*, which would never have been written had he not studied at Berlin, will enable us to judge more fairly than M. Scherer's rather severe criticism of the “peculiarities of style” which his friend brought home with him. On these delicate matters it would not become a stranger to pronounce; but there can be no doubt, as M. Scherer testifies, that Amiel has grave and eloquent pages, equal to some of the sublimest in his native tongue. He rises above “René.” I am not sure that he yields always to Pascal.

M. Scherer met him first at Geneva in 1849, on his return from the philosophic pilgrimage in the course of

which he had been changed from a Calvinist into a mystic and disciple of Schleiermacher. He had acquired an infinity of learning, but his conversation was lively and unaffected, his appearance engaging, and his whole manner brilliant. A few months afterwards he won the Chair of *Æsthetics* in the University. But the appointment lay in the hands of the Radicals, who in 1846 had overthrown the bourgeoisie; and Amiel, without fault of his own, was condemned to social ostracism. He resented the isolation keenly, all the more that his affinities were never democratic. Nature had given him the temperament of genius, while he was thrown into a world where genius, as he often repeats, could never feel at home. Geneva had nothing in common with Berlin and Heidelberg. Its religion and politics were its own, but how could Amiel take pleasure in them? From this uncomfortable sense of estrangement he never became free.

In 1854 he changed into the Chair of Philosophy, and again he failed with his students as he had failed in society. He was too subtle, too much enamoured of the wide and vast *rapprochements* of ideas into which he had been initiated by the Hegelians. He might have taught better had he thought less. M. Charles Dollfuss made an opening for him in the *Revue Germanique*. But his efforts were abortive. Amiel, haunted by the shadow of perfection, would write only the best, and believed that the best was not in his power. It was the same with all other things offered to this strange self-tormentor. Terrified with "the fatality of consequences," he committed himself as little as possible. Life, he deemed, was an old Greek tragedy, and the past an irresistible Fate. His friends did not know what to make of him.

In fact, he was stricken with scepticism. Like Luther, like Schleiermacher, he had for a time believed in the "Jesus of the Fourth Gospel." But Hegel taught him to consider "the metamorphosis of mind"; Christianity itself appeared to be a process of evolution, or "becoming," and we read in the "Journal" that the Church's duty is "to undergo from age to age a fresh change, and to be ever spiritualising its conception of Christ and of salvation." Amiel had thus quitted the firm ground of dogma and

set out on a voyage of discovery. It may be questioned whether he reached a new continent; but he voyaged all his life. Another Hegelian lesson which he laid to heart was that things can be known only in connection, that nothing stands by itself, that thought is, like the myriad lives which shadow it forth in phenomena, an organism, and that unless we have seized "the totality" our labour is in vain. That passion for the One, everlasting and unchangeable, which always returns when science has carried men dispersedly into all provinces of research, and when division of labour means confusion of thought, had taken overmastering hold of him; in his solitary life, plunged in reflection, he was drawn towards the *Henosis* of Plotinus, the All and One, of which he dreamed that he was only a portion.

But his dream took an astonishing turn. The thought of Unity he called his opium, his *haschisch*; it intoxicated him like a magic philtre. With Baudelaire he might have entered through its charm into one of those "artificial Paradises" which fascinate while they destroy what is wholesome and pure. Amiel, however, went his own way, and a very strange way it was—hardly to be understood as we read of it in his surely unparalleled description. As we say of Shakespeare that he identifies himself with each of his characters and is lost in them, as of Wordsworth it may be truly asserted that his verses are steeped in the feeling of the landscape which they conjure up by an instantaneous power, so Amiel declares that he possessed a faculty akin to these, but descending—if I may so express his meaning—a stage below Wordsworth, and not found in Shakespeare, unless perchance in "The Tempest" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." He can "think himself down" to any degree of the impersonal, the unconscious, and the subterconscious. He knows the secret which has created Fairyland. He has entered into the dim life of the lower existences, and can put off in waking hours the human self, with its attributes. His thought is Protean; it assumes every form. To quote his strange words on a subject no less out of the common, Amiel's disposition was essentially—the sentence runs thus in French—"métamorphosable,

polarisable, et virtuelle." He was a fleeting, subtle spirit, to be fixed by no chemistry, issuing free from every combination into which it was drawn, and quick to feel with every influence.

These curious—nay, uncanny—phrases occur again and again in the "Journal Intime." A physician would pronounce their writer morbid; and it is certain that, were madness endowed with analytic powers, it would thus portray its own disordered imaginings. An intellect which could abdicate consciousness at will, and remain so long *under water*, ran the risk of asphyxiation. Amiel would perhaps have maintained that he was only more attentive than other men to streams of imagery which are present always, but which glide along by the side of the main current, and are unobserved in the hurry of every day. Consciousness is knitted of many strands; we dream at all times, even while we are absorbed in thought. The philosopher and the saint equally believe that there is a Divine life *in* the universe, though not necessarily of it. Peculiar to Amiel it is that he should have been able to descend step by step into the abyss—sinking a shaft, as it were, into pre-historic and pre-conscious strata of existence unexplored as yet by psychology. Let him be supposed to have lain under a delusion, and to have dreamt that he so dreamed; but even of this will a comprehensive science take note. Introspection, like magnetism, has its prodigies, and these are of them.

Out of conceit, then, with himself and all around him, resigning the "province of earthly life," and as devoid of self-will as the most ascetic Hindu, Amiel passed through all the ways of that pilgrimage so often described, which, beginning with spiritual recollection, ascends to rapturous heights, and ends too commonly in despair and madness. To "put off one's personality" is at first delightful; then it becomes a habit, and reverie succeeds to thought as the long Polar night succeeds to the brief hours of sunshine in the Arctic regions. By-and-by the faculties are absorbed as in a dream. But the dream turns to a nightmare; Nature will have her revenge; and he that dared to lift the veil of Isis, with its thousand agreeable illusions, discovers behind it—nothing. What is the life

of man? Amiel replies: "Un néant qui s'ignore, et aussitôt que ce néant se connaît, la vie individuelle est abolie en principe. Sitôt l'illusion évanouie, le néant reprend son règne éternel."

In the language of Hegel, and, remarkably enough, of Schopenhauer, Amiel concludes that the Absolute must needs be the zero of all determination; the only manner of Being that is proper to it is Not to Be. Thought is doomed to dissolve into the Unchangeable Rest, which is the true and lasting state of infinite Nothingness. Like Gautama, he has beheld the Great Wheel of universal illusion, on which all things turn. Perfect knowledge is not, in this philosophy, a Vision Beatific; it is "the intuition of the mighty Death." In naming it thus, Amiel spoke what he knew. Whether the spirit was good or evil which led him upwards and downwards on the ladder of Being, and gave him a glimpse of the unending metamorphoses wherein, like Goethe, he had such joy, the certain effect—we must not shrink from saying it—was moral suicide, slow as it was sure, and exquisitely painful. To this man the Buddhism, at which fashionable persons delight to play, was so real that it killed him. As the motives for action were withdrawn, action itself ceased; and, with a prisoner's or an invalid's busy idleness, he could listen to each throb of his tortured heart and count its lessening beats. There is an extraordinary likeness between his expressions on this subject and those with which Edgar Poe begins his unpleasant fiction of "Berenice." It seemed to this victim of Pessimism that "the centre of his indifference" was "a tacit protest against the order of things." He could not trust God or Nature. In spite of rare qualities, knowledge given to one in a thousand, and an affectionate disposition, he lay enchanted in his own misery, and must have raged against the Highest, had not Christianity come to his relief.

For these volumes exhibit a drama of thought where opposite forces are striving, and the victory remains in suspense to the end. They are a specimen of that literature which, again to quote George Sand, "*se prépare et s'avance à grands pas, idéale, intérieure, ne relevant*

que de la conscience humaine, n'empruntant au monde des sens que la forme et le vêtement de ses inspirations." Amiel, brought up according to the strictest sect of his religion, a Calvinist, and thrown into the furnace seven times heated of German criticism, lived his life among the new philosophies, systems of history, and revised Christianities, in which all agreed that Church and dogma were tottering to destruction. His keen spiritual sagacity led him to the heart of the problem. A striking passage, dated April 7th, 1851, insists upon that distinction "between Socrates and Jesus" which, appearing as the antithesis of Hellenism and Hebraism in the pages of Heine, has become celebrated in English literature. Speaking of the Neo-Hegelians, Rüge and Kuno Fischer, the Diarist points out that while they aim at enlightenment, they possess no secret whereby to cleanse or sanctify the soul. Their religion, founded on pure thought, begins and ends in metaphysics. But Christianity speaks to the heart: it preaches redemption, nor can it be satisfied with mere enlightenment. And Amiel declares that the head and front of the controversy is the reality of sin. "What is it that brings salvation?" he defines as the question of humanity. "How can man be made truly man? Is the deepest root of his being responsibility?" If science, he goes on to argue, cannot give us love, it proves itself inadequate. But love is the very thing it cannot give. We need a love founded on our moral nature which shall make the centre of the individual one with the centre of all Being, and science offers nothing but the cold *Amor intellectualis* of Spinoza. Moral energy is our inmost life; therefore saints and heroes are wanted rather than metaphysicians, to create by their examples those lofty habits which can never be produced by abstract reasoning.

One who could state the question with such admirable lucidity was in no danger of fancying, as so many do, that science alone, whether physical or metaphysical, is about to renew the face of the earth. Writing at Lancy, on a lovely spring morning in 1852, he exclaims:

How are all things transfigured at a moment like this! The world is an allegory; the ideal is more real than any fact; fairy tales and legends are as true as natural history—nay, truer, for as emblems

they are more transparent. The only substance is the soul. What are all other things?—shadow, pretence, figure, symbol, and dream; conscience alone is immortal, objective, utterly real; the world is but a piece of fireworks, a sublime panorama intended to delight and educate the soul. Conscience is a universe of which the sun is love.

Mindful of Schelling, he argues that nature must become spirit, and spirit aim at incarnating itself again in visible forms. But he would take a different way from mere physical science, mere democratic liberty, and what he might have deemed the modern French or American road to an imagined future. In us the Divine life is a succession of deaths; man is the true Ulysses, travelling through scenes innumerable, at every stage initiated into higher mysteries. God is the Father of spirits. Hence the attempt to deal with mankind in masses, and as if they were but a vast machine, instead of appealing to faith and loyalty in the individual, is imperilling the very nobleness of our kind, for it implies the subordination of conscience to interest. "There are two ways of taking democracy," and one of them, now wide-spread, runs into a base mechanical despotism. It is criminal, for it does violence to the conscience itself. These reflections are at the opposite pole to "modern thought," as understood in the camp of the Materialists. But Amiel never played false to them. While he felt that it is not good for man to be alone; that, in Aristotle's phrase, man is a social animal, and that we round our existence by laying stress on the qualities and striving after the perfections in which we know ourselves to be lacking, he never looked on the many as do certain democrats, to whom they are cyphers, and the constitutional machinery, the "caucus" or the party, that which gives them a momentary value. This profound thinker, who moved "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife," had no faith in nostrums. He shared in the Christian's insight too largely not to perceive that the evil of the world goes down below the reach of governments and majorities. As he brushed aside the Materialism which glories in resting on science (whereas its only foundation is the hardihood of dogmatists) in like manner he turned from the hustings and ballot-box of Geneva to lay hold, if he might, upon the perfect life.

That life cannot, he said, be attained by seeking after happiness. Its law is self-sacrifice, but self-sacrifice may become a joy. Will any Materialism account for that? "Man," he affirms in a sentence which we might ascribe to Faust, "is the great deep. Heaven and hell, the universe itself, are within us." The vision of sin, the passions and fierce longings of our nature, filled him with that aboriginal dread out of which the mythologies and theogonies of old times have arisen. "How," he exclaims, "can we escape from shipwreck in the mighty waters, except we have faith in a merciful and loving Father, whose ray divine lights up the conscience and assures our freedom?"

All this reads so like Christianity that we need not dwell upon its variation from the traditional type. It did not, however, restore Amiel to a better state, when, like René, he had conceived, "par rêverie oisive," a distaste for existence. Turn his eyes where he might from the Via Dolorosa, his steps were always pursuing it. He had doubted and he had sinned. But still, "to die to sin, that astonishing word of the Christian message, remains the grandest solution of the mystery of the inward life." So, too, he could read the Gospel, and his sorrow would be taken away—to return, like the clouds after the rain.

How appalling (he writes) is the inexorable progress which swallows up individual being and cuts short our remembrance! To be born, to be in trouble for a while, and then to disappear, is the sum of that momentary drama which we call life. If there be nothing immortal within us, how slight a thing is man! And he is forgotten even more than he forgets.

Then Amiel yields again to the enervating pleasure of the Buddhist and the Sūfi, though conscience declares it to be something lower by much than "the joy of energy, the sweetness of love, the beauty of enthusiasm, the holy delight of duty accomplished." Instructive and saddening words are these! More and more he came to abide in Kedar, which, being interpreted, is darkness. "Après m'être distrait," he says, with an allusion to the Second Part of *Faust*, "étourdi, noyé, dans les caprices des existences fugitives, sans réussir à m'enivrer ni à m'aveugler, je

retrouve l'abîme insondable, le gouffre morne et silencieux où résident les Mères." At the beginning of 1867 he breaks forth, "Melancholy, languor, lassitude! The thirst after the long sleep grows upon me, and is withstood only by the felt need of a sustained heroic sacrifice." No easy task, he continues, when the happiest among men is but a *Weltmüde*, who puts on a good face before the world, and endeavours vainly to forget his secret thought—"thought sad as the grave, of things irreparable." Amiel lays his finger on the wound: "Our desire for the Infinite is not satisfied. God is not with us."

In his younger days he believed in Providence; now that faith is lost. "Thou hast it not," so runs his rebuke; "the things that are seem to thee fortuitous, as though they might be or might not. Nothing in thy state seems providential." He possessed the fatal gift of turning the old beliefs against the new, and the new against the old. Again and again he inquires whether history be not all chance, and so-called laws of nature "imaginationes of our reason, so constructed as to delude itself with a supposed order and a logic not really extant in things." His thought "swings backwards and forwards between general views which contradict one another." But thus to obey "all the instincts of human nature" was to obey none of them; they cancelled their several effects, and the result in action was zero. A fragment, in which we read of Amiel's marked tendency to clairvoyance and somnambulism (by no means surprising in such a man), tells us that a lady among his friends described him as "superlatively feminine with regard to impressions." As were his outward senses, so was his mind. He could not go forward in any path but he heard voices calling him back. The power of "universal sympathy" may be fascinating; it is certainly dangerous; for what is it too often but scepticism "touched with emotion"? Amiel contrasts "freedom and sanctity" as opposite ideals. He would have done better to distinguish between good and evil, warned by his own dictum that freedom implies a standard which is the essential Right, and which we are called upon to live by. He had no standard, and he could not be said truly to live.

And so he reaches his forty-seventh year, and has not found "the only viaticum of life"—a great task and a circle of serious friendships. He has sunk below even Buddhism, into utter weariness. "The hope of a blessed immortality," he writes, with gentle mockery of himself, "would be something better." One thing strikes him with astonishment: the conspiracy of all men "to cover up the world's sadness." Then he casts his eyes on "the Saints of the East and of classic times and Christianity," who have known the anguish of the spirit even as he, but have come forth conquerors. His thoughts dwell upon the vital force of the New Testament, which is equally that of the Church: faith in the union of God and man in Jesus. This he rightly terms the Everlasting Gospel. At Mornex, on Easter Day, he listens to the bells in the valley beneath him, and, true artist and human spirit as he is, cannot help whispering, "Man must have a religion: is not the Christian the best, after all? The religion of sin, repentance, and reconciliation, of the new birth and the life everlasting?" Why did he not cleave to it, then? Because he detested "to be imprisoned in an arbitrary form, though it were of his own choosing." A little later he says finely: "The Christian prayer runs 'Deliver us from evil'; the Buddhist, 'Deliver us from existence.'" In his melancholy pious way he concludes: "What does it signify whether immortality be true or nothingness be true? Whatever is to be will be right. Still, we must join with Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno against the religion of Chance and of the Pessimists. . . . Help to the victory of the Good! That is the common device of saints and sages. Science echoes the word which Cleanthes spoke, 'Socii Dei sumus.'"

M. Vacherot's book, "*La Religion*," leads him to ask again whether, as Materialists believe, religion be a mere survival from lower stages of development. Were it such, it would be doomed. "If God be no more than the category of the Ideal, religion will pass like the dreams of youth." But how if it were a faculty parallel to that of intellect? Would it not last while feeling lasted? He defines it as "living in God, and face to face with God." It is, then, a part of our nature. While the

orthodox Calvinists and "Liberal Christians" were struggling hand to hand around him, he wrote: "Neither science nor literature has the empire of the soul; in religion sanctity alone can rule." The defect of Liberal Protestants is that they deal lightly with sin. When their righteousness abounds more than that of the churches, they will satisfy the Master's condition, but not till then. However, he continues, the Protestantism of history has no longer a justification; it was a provisional stage bound up with the notion of an inspired book and a written revelation. "Once that assumption is decided to be fictitious, Protestantism will melt away. It will be forced to retreat upon conscience and natural religion. MM. Réville, Coquerel, Fontanès, and Buisson accept the consequence. They are the vanguard of Protestantism, but the laggards of free thought." A shrewd conclusion, and a memorable phrase! There are "laggards of free thought" outside Geneva.

"But the Church," Amiel goes on, "exists by reason of her positive teaching." Conscience must, in a sense, be the judge of dogma, yet it does not follow that conscience, unaided by revelation, could discover dogma. No Church will ever be set up on criticism, whether it be the somewhat dull and bourgeois criticism which has flourished at Geneva, or the "dilettantism made perfect of the Renaissance," ascribed in a subsequent passage to M. Renan. As for Amiel, he was in his own eyes neither dilettante nor bourgeois. Scepticism, though the outcome, did not appear to him the scope of his inquiries. Had not Jacobi, too, "a Christian heart with a Pagan head"? He thought himself "a simple nature, a saddened, sincere artist who believed in the ideal, in love, in sanctity, in all the angelic superstitions." His being yearned for Paradise and life eternal. "A whole millennium of idyls" lay slumbering in his heart. And the cause why he could not be a mocker indeed was that, with the vehemence of a St. Paul, he denounced to himself "the instinct we bear within us of revolt," which is "an enemy to law, bending under no yoke, rebellious to reason, to wisdom, and to duty." It is the *radicale Böse* which Kant has dwelt upon. "Sin," repeats Amiel, "is in our very marrow; it

flows on like the blood in our veins; it mingles in our substance." We recognise Calvin in the sound of these strong words. Is there not a resemblance also between this "instinct of denial" and the "passion for inward liberty," which Amiel set down as his sole or his chief indulgence? The remedy for sin is not freedom from a standard; it is crucifixion, and he knew it well. "Mankind," he writes on Good Friday, "still believe in the Cross, which has been the Church's banner and will be her salvation." The world, "living by faith and growing by science," will never have done with Calvary; and civilisation "threatened by doubters, phenomenists, and materialists" will be saved, if at all, by religious men, to whom their conscience is of more account than a whole universe.

Excellent sayings, if they did not end in a Quietism which declined even to do good, as Materialism held that there was no good to be done! Whether gazing with large and steady eyes upon the Alps of Valais, or scanning the latest science with his friends, Brown and Karl Ritter, Amiel is always afraid lest nature should be "a fleeting, indifferent illusion." Is there in heaven a spectator of the scene, and what is He—Brahma the unconscious or the living God? "Ah!" he exclaims, "the Infinite, of which Maya seems the veil, is but an empty abyss; life is an unseen agony, and every man the infinitesimal of Nothing."

Our aim, then, must be to despoil ourselves of existence. Is not that very process invading society, breaking down ranks, abolishing the graceful courtesies of life, giving us formulas for exquisite forms, realism for poetry, and philosophy for romance? He was thinking of Balzac, Stendhal, Taine, Zola, and the Second Empire. He likened our moral atmosphere to the choke-damp of a mine. Even in Goethe he detected with rare sagacity a secret dryness. But more than literature was at stake. "Numbers," said Amiel, "are not wisdom"; the nations stand on the edge of a tremendous catastrophe. He feared for the small peoples, like his own. Cosmopolitans—the Communists of 1871—have "neither country, nor ancient memories, nor property, nor religion." "The orgies of

philosophic thought" (to which he had so fatal a propension himself) do, in fact, affirm existence to be an error, and push to its consequences Proudhon's axiom, that "Dieu c'est le Mal." Among the Germans, Schopenhauer's doctrine has run into monstrous forms, one of which, rightly termed "Sivaism," blasphemes by the mouth of Bahnsen and other *theophobists*, who make the origin of things a blind bad Will. What are we to think when liberty and equality, each proclaimed to be the right of man, and each set in opposition to the other, are driving the servile races into the ranks of Nihilism, and making of the worn-out races a plaything for demagogues? when history reads like a succession of disasters, and religious differences are degenerating into social anarchy, while every principle which was once essential to the conduct of life has been reversed or trampled upon? Does not the contrast between this state of things (miscalled civilisation) and the ideal proposed by science, faith, reason, and poetry teach us that we have made a false step—nay, that we are over the edge, and descending with frightful velocity into the deeps. There is not a man living, I venture to say, that looks upon the present condition of society without apprehension of the things that are coming upon it.

Amid such consuming thoughts Amiel sank into a long decline. We find him in 1872 at Scheveningen-by-the-Sea, whither he had gone to please his friends. For himself he had ceased to hope. "My Credo," he sadly writes, "has melted away. Yet I do believe in good, in the moral order, in salvation." Perhaps, he adds, philosophy, which is now mere physics, will rise by-and-by to Aristotle and Plato, "to the metaphysics of the Good and of Final Causes, or even to the Science of Spirit." In another place he states the problem thus: "Three religions are conceivable—Nature may be indifferent, or Omnipotence may be Satanic, or there may be a good and holy God. The second of these is as horrible as unlikely. The first needs as its other half Stoicism. The third alone brings happiness. But it is hard to reconcile this best of beliefs with our knowledge of the laws of Nature." He could not bring himself to a decision.

The last six years of his life were spent as on a death-bed. His physicians sent him in September 1874 to Hyères, and he stayed there, but had no good of it, till the next April. "I know," the Journal says, when he is suffering as he so often did, "that not one of my desires will be fulfilled; but I have long renounced desire. There is a melancholy sweetness in renunciation when we have lost heart. I hope my friends who have loved me thus far will love me even to the end. Is it hoping too much? Be this also as God wills." He quitted Hyères with regret, went home, wrote a little, heard much music, and put forth his volume of translations, "*Les Etrangères*," to which he might well have prefixed the significant motto—a summary of his existence—"Car le néant peut seul bien cacher l'infini." In July 1876 he grew worse. "How am I to bear these days, or to fill them?" he cries out; "my soul and body are dying together." It was a mental agony, indeed, tempered with meditations exquisitely sweet, as that of January 13th, 1879, when he seemed to behold his spirit in eternity. Prayer was like balm to his wounded feelings. Yet temptation came with it, and a strange longing for "the desirable sight of Nirvana." Sometimes, in the spirit of Victor Hugo, discovering beauty in dreadful things, he ventures to write, "C'est le bonheur qui rugit au fond du gouffre. C'est Dieu qui appelle ou qui se venge."

The shadow of death was upon him when he wrote the remarkable passage I am about to reproduce. It may be termed his last confession:

For many years the Immanent God has been more real to me than the God beyond the universe; the religion of Jacob has been more strange to me than that of Kant or Spinoza. All the *Semitic dramaturgy* has affected me like a thing of the imagination. The worth of the Apostolic documents has altered in my eyes. With a growing clearness, faith and truth have become distinct from one another. Religious psychology has turned to a matter of seeming, and has lost its noumenal value. The Apologies of Pascal, Leibnitz, and Secrétan appear to me no more convincing than those of the Middle Ages, for they take for granted what is in question, a revealed doctrine, a definite unchanging Christianity. There is now left to me from all my studies only a new theory of the phenomena of mind—the intuition of the universal metamorphosis. Particular convictions,

decided principles, sharp formulas are prejudices not without a use in daily life, but implying narrowness of thought; the Absolute carried into detail is absurd and contradictory. All parties, whether in politics, religion, æsthetics, or literature, are mere petrifications of mind. All specific doctrine is stiff and stupid; yet the starchiness may be necessary in its season. In so far as our *monad* thinks, it is untrammelled by time, space, and historical surroundings; but in so far as it is individual and acts, it must yield to current illusions and take definite aim. We play two parts in life.

He concludes by denying personality: "We keep in reserve a future that will never come. *Omnis moriar.*"

It is sad work transcribing these pages from the "Apocalypse of Nirvana." But there are no more of them. Amiel's lessons were ended. Letters came to him from far and near, from Lausanne, Neuchâtel, Paris, London; flowers were sent him by friendly hands. They were garlands flung on a grave. He died at the end of April 1881. As the Journal drops from his hand for the last time, he utters a melancholy cry:

Que vivre est difficile, ô mon cœur fatigué.

This "story of the heart," as Richard Jefferies would term it, conveys its own moral. "Shall we say," inquires Cardinal Newman, after contrasting Montaigne and Pascal, "that there is no such thing as truth and error, but that anything is true to a man which he troweth? and not rather, as the solution of a great mystery, that truth there is, and attainable it is, but that its rays stream in upon us through the medium of our moral as well as our intellectual being?" In other words, is not faith an energy, rather than the passive determination of abstract reasoning? But again, energy is character; for, in the profound words of Novalis, "Character is a perfectly educated will." We may go even a step beyond, and assert, with the same writer, that we ought to be ashamed of our imbecility, "if we could not so deal with our thoughts as to think what we chose"—that is to say, not think capriciously and fancifully, but guide our intellect in such wise that it shall not be carried away by every wind of doctrine, like a vessel which has sails but is without a rudder. If religion compelled

our assent like mathematics, it would, like mathematics, lose its moral significance. There is a reason in the nature of things why, with Kant and Jean Paul, we should look up to Freedom as the third star in that constellation of God and Immortality which lights the way to perfection. An abstract God will not save us. But to know Him as He is, we must exercise that moral liberty which is the highest gift of our nature, and the heart of our being.

The world is a world of facts, in which we cannot concern ourselves with fine-spun theories, made by men who have never tasted life's exceeding bitterness, never eaten their bread with tears, never known those griefs which, piercing to the heart, lay open its spiritual essence. Nor yet again is religion to be found in mere darkness. To what living faith can we betake ourselves, then, except to faith in Jesus? I know of none. The despairing creeds bring me no light; those which prate of enlightenment have no strength in them. Buddhism, Pessimism, Liberalism, are all alike in their spiritual impotence. Christianity has endured nigh upon two thousand years, and its day is not yet over. "Man must have a religion," Amiel repeats: "is not the Christian the best after all? The religion of sin, repentance, and reconciliation, of the new birth and the life everlasting." A powerful argument in a few words! But it is the substance of Christian apologies, old or new. Can it be refuted? And do not its grace and majesty go far to prove that the "Semitic miracle-play" which Amiel put from him on his deathbed, is no idle fiction, no empty symbolising, but the very interposition of God Himself on the stage of history? *Ego enim qui loquebar, ecce adsum.*

V

HEINRICH HEINE¹

UNDER the name of Euphorion in the "graceful little fantasy piece called Helena," afterwards embodied in the "Second Part of Faust," Goethe, as is well known, celebrated the genius and early death of Byron. To the old poet in Weimar reading "Manfred" and "Childe Harold" it appeared that their author belonged to the new race of men which he had long ago foreboded in "Werther," "Wilhelm Meister," and the opening scenes of his mightiest tragedy. For these scenes, which to a philosophic eye excel in power and purpose the "Gretchen Romance" up to which they lead, are a valediction to the medieval, nay, to the Christian world of thought, and a longing for some yet undisclosed ideal. But the child of Faust and Helen, who was to combine the mysterious beauty of Romanticism with Greek lightness, and mental suffering with eternal youth—*Heiterkeit mit Selbst-Bewusstsein*—but who was snatched from men's sight in a blaze of glory while his lyre lay dashed on the ground, would seem to have glanced out upon Europe in the hero poet who died at Missolonghi in 1824. Him, therefore, Goethe canonised. He made of his poems a shining constellation in the firmament which was to spread its crystal over a renewed earth. And yet, as the years go on, Byron seems less and less to maintain that skyey altitude. In vain has Mr. Arnold exalted him as the

¹ 1. "Sämmtliche Werke." Von Heinrich Heine. Hamburg, 1876. 2. "Memoiren." Von Heinrich Heine. Hamburg, 1885. 3. "H. Heine's Leben und Werke." Von Adolf Strodtmann. Hamburg, 1884. 4. "H. Heine." Von Robert Proelss. Stuttgart, 1886. (This, the latest account of Heine, is well-informed, severe, and luminous, but less comprehensive than Strodtmann.)

“greatest elementary power” since Shakespeare, if he must allow in the same breath that he had “little culture” and “no ideas.” To a generation unacquainted with Byron the modern spirit does not incarnate itself in “Don Juan.” For the type of which Goethe was in search we must look elsewhere.

Curiously enough, the old man himself, had he chosen, might have discovered the offspring of Faust and Helen nearer home, in the shy, not over-tall, fair, or red-haired youth, who once paid him a brief, unsatisfactory visit, and remarked to him on the goodness of the plums which grew along the Jena road. But there were difficulties in the way. Byron, an English lord, travelling though Europe, recording in distinguished verse his distinguished impression of the battlefields, classic ruins, and Grecian Isles which he haughtily gazed upon, in the silent, sardonic manner of Corinne’s Lord Nelville, or Julie’s Lord Edward, must have struck Goethe as the very pattern of aristocratic genius. He was the *reisende Engländer* in perfection, and unquestionably a poet of a high order. Accustomed himself to strive after the opposed distinctions of a man of courts and a son of the Muses, Goethe could not fail to be impressed when a young patrician of four-and-twenty flashed upon the scene, and with easy magnificence claimed all the honours as by right of nature. “This surely,” we may fancy him as pointing out to Eckermann, “must be Euphorion—this, and not the Jew poet from Düsseldorf whose lyrics they are singing in University beerhouses.” What, after all, was Heine but a student out at elbows, whose Jewish kinsfolk were making greasy money on the Dreckwall at Hamburg, who had neither travelled nor fought, and to whom Hellenic literature meant the Greek grammar which he had conned under a disbanded Jesuit, in the old Franciscan cloister of his native town? Between Byron and such a one the contrast was great indeed. Heine seemed by no means fit to be translated to the stars, and his discarded lyre and filthy gaberdine would but serve to remind men of the Judengasse in which his ancestors spent their sordid lives, or, at best, might fetch the price of old clothes in a German Wardour Street.

Wonderful are the ways of history! The gods go about disguised, and Euphorion, in a fit of anger, will betray to a quick ear the high nasal tones which tell of *Piut* and *Selicha* chanted age after age in the Hebrew synagogue. Goethe was no prophet when he canonised Byron. Not Byron, but Heine remains, and is sure to remain, as a living emblem of the century in which the romantic was married to the plastic genius. He is their true offspring. Like yet unlike them both, he bears on his brow the light of a fresh ideal, and in his heart the spirit of modern thought. Heine is at once the child of the age and its embodiment, often fantastic, oftener still a mocker of it as of himself, but always its true effigies. He is not Greek-classic, nor medieval-Romantic, any more than Beethoven is Palestrina, or Raffaele Frà Angelico. Yet in a true sense he, like all writers that have greatly influenced their generation, is "made and moulded of things past." He is originality itself, so individual that hardly a page of his prose writings betrays imitation of a model; while his verse, which at the beginning borrowed some touches of Rückert and Uhland, speedily spread its wings and soared into its own ether. He is cosmopolitan, not in the mere artistic sense, like those poets who have delighted in pictures of the East, or of Greece and Italy, because of their foreign colour and intense sunshine, but as one to whom, in his best moments, all mankind (not excluding John Bull, whom he hated) are a single family, and his home is where a human heart throbs or suffers.

But he remains a Hebrew by his pathos and energy, a German by his dreamy Pantheistic speculation, a Rhineland-er by the one grain of sentiment which even cynical Paris cannot quite neutralise in him, and above all the singer of the "Lyrical Intermezzo," with its wild passion and its unaffected simplicity, from whose lips the tale of love, a thousand times repeated, comes to us like strange melancholy music, in an unattempted key. What Heine thought, and sang, and suffered will long continue to interest, not Germany alone, but Europe. For to him, far more than to Byron, the line of "Wallenstein" applies: truly his life "was a battle and a march,"—a battle for the new ideas that are striving to make an

end of the old, a march from combat to combat and from suffering to suffering, until he sank on the field in the afternoon of a dubious day.

Whether we look on him as a pioneer of freedom and intellect, or as a rebel against the Divine order of things, we cannot question the fact that he clothed in words and imagery of the most affecting and most winning loveliness those thoughts which are now shaking our institutions to their centre. He was not, and he could not be, a leader of men. But he knew how to combine art with life, and life with art. If his strains were not *Tyrtæan*, they were *Orphic*; not, as he mockingly said, like those of Goethe, "beautifully objective," but full of the present and the immediate, as though the century had made him its voice, and sang or moaned through his eloquent lips, as by the hands of others it fought against the *Metternichs* and the *Bourbons*. There are those who would read the chronicle of the first half of that age in Victor Hugo; but Heine, whether as lyric poet or historian, has drunk more deeply of its spirit, and shows us many more of its facets. He goes to the quick, while Hugo is solemnly gesticulating, or mouthing his rants of *Tamburlane*. And he has infinite wit and humour—qualities in which the French dithyrambic poet was singularly wanting. Heine gives us life, not caricature; his very exaggerations have a design in them; neither is he, like Hugo, their dupe. He has an unfailing, almost too powerful, sense of the prose reality of things, while out of their dusty sordidness he can extract the finest poetry. He is no realist, in the slang or technical meaning of the phrase; but no one was ever less deceived by rhetoric, ornament, or outside tinsel. He has the coarser traits of Swift and Rabelais—in a painful degree, English readers will be apt to fancy,—in such wise, at all events, as to prove that if he was a true poet, his poetry did not take leave of the world around him. It rendered back not idle imaginings, but what he saw and felt. This, indeed, he has in common with the highest singers, from Homer to Tennyson. What is peculiar to him is the form in which his poetical spirit clothed itself, and the range of vision over which he looked out. To comprehend either we must study his life. For in Heine

the poet and his poetry are one; we cannot separate them. He is personal by necessity, and is always descanting on his own feelings. It is the quintessence of the subjective style. Let us inquire, then, what manner of man he was.

Heinrich Heine was born at Düsseldorf on December 13th, 1799. It is amusing to note that Mr. Arnold, in repeated editions of his "Essays in Criticism," speaks of Heine as "born at Hamburg"; although, since he recommends the "Reisebilder" to English readers, and translates passages from them, we might suppose that he had read them himself, and must be acquainted with the humorous reference to the house in the Bolkerstrasse which the poet says he always thought of when he spoke of "going home."¹ "Yes, madam," he exclaims in the "Buch Le Grand," "here was I born, and I remark it expressly in case that after my death seven cities—Schilda, Krähwinkel, Polkwitz, Bockum, Dülken, Göttingen, and Schoppenstädt—should contend for the honour of being my native city." The date of his birth, however, has given rise to considerable discussion, now set at rest by his biographer, Herr Adolf Strodtmann, with the help of the church register of "the Evangelical congregation of St. Martin's at Heiligenstadt," where Heine went through the ceremony of baptism, and was required to give a legal account of himself to "Master Gottlob Christian Grimm," who had the doubtful honour of opening to him the doors of the Church and of Prussian society by this religious rite.²

He came of undistinguished Jewish parentage on both sides. His father, Samson Heine, who was born at Hanover, August 19th, 1764, was one of six surviving children, all brought up in straitened circumstances, and with little or no education. But they seem to have inherited the genius of their race for money-making. Isaac, the eldest brother, who settled at Bordeaux, left a considerable fortune, and his sons Armand and Michel became heads of the well-known banking firm of Oppenheim & Fould in Paris; while the third brother, Solomon,

¹ "Reisebilder," vol. i. p. 224.

² Strodtmann, since publishing the early correspondence of Heine's mother, inclines to 1797 as the year of the poet's birth—on insufficient grounds as it appears to Proelss (p.4).

of whom we shall often hear in the sequel, setting out in his seventeenth year from his father's house in Hanover, "with a pair of leather breeches and sixteen groschen in the pocket of them," made a pilgrimage to Hamburg, and there by his thrift and industry rose from the counter of the money-changer to the highest position in the realm of finance, and to the ownership of hundreds of thousands.

The less-favoured Samson took a different course, and was by no means so lucky. Business led him in December 1798 to Düsseldorf, where he made the acquaintance of a Jewish doctor of medicine, Simon van Geldern, whose ancestor, Isaac, had come out of Holland into the Duchy of Jülich-Berg about the year 1700. He was not noble, though the Heines liked to picture him as such. The Jews had no family-names until in various countries they were compelled by law to assume them, and Van Geldern does but mean "from Guelders." Isaac, however, was a rich man, and his sons and grandsons, who practised medicine as the only profession, besides banking, open to Israelites, imitated the founder of their house in their efforts to succour and raise up their downtrodden brethren. These traits survived in Samson Heine's friend, Simon van Geldern; while much of the turn for literature, which seems to have been hereditary in this family, was inherited by his sister, named Betty. In spite of her domestic duties (for she acted as Simon's housekeeper), she became an accomplished woman, and a diligent reader of Rousseau and Goethe. She was near thirty, and had refused several offers of marriage. Samson Heine fell in love with her at first sight, and on February 1st, 1799, they were made man and wife, after the briefest of courtships, as the Jewish custom, which is somewhat Oriental, recommends. In a small one-storied house, 602, Bolkerstrasse, they set up a retail shop for cloth and manufactured articles, which so far prospered that during the wars of Napoleon Samson Heine was able to undertake contracts for cloth—we are not told to what extent—for the French army. Such was the mean little abode in which Heinrich Heine first saw the light.

His father was only a merchant in the Scotch sense

of the term, and, even so, a singularly unfortunate one. He was always struggling with poverty, and, in spite of his dealings with the French clothing commissariat, always suffering loss. Abilities of any kind he did not possess in a marked degree. When we have said that he admired Napoleon enthusiastically, and arrayed himself in the uniform of the Garde Mobile at Düsseldorf during the French occupation between 1806 and 1809, we may dismiss him from the tableau of his son's existence.¹

Although Harry Heine, for so he was originally named, has left us many charmingly comic as well as serious pictures of the times when he was a boy, and of the political changes undergone by his native state, it is not easy to write a connected account of his early years. The French influence predominated out of doors; at home he was brought up in a careful observance of the Jewish tradition. Both left indelible traces on his mind and character. To the oppressed people of Israel, now at length declared equal before the law with their fellow-countrymen, Napoleon appeared like the long-expected Messiah, whose advent all but a rationalising few were still taught to look for. Patriotism, if we mean thereby devotion to the institutions of the Holy Roman Empire, was hardly to be supposed in men whom its laws denounced after the tyrannous fashion of the Imperial Jurists, *Non licet esse vos*. There had never been a time in the remembrance of the German Jews when they were not liable to be plundered and persecuted. The miserable record of suffering reaches down to the days of Lessing; and Nathan the Wise might have alluded to things perpetrated in the eighteenth century as demonstration plain of the spirit in which so-called Christians still regarded the children of Israel, and of the calumnies repeated against them age after age by ignorance and prejudice.² They were not only excommunicated, but socially ostracised. Their schools, their books, their very existence as a religious people, were always in danger. There was no justice for them, and little mercy.

Bearing these things in mind, we cannot be astonished

¹ But see Proelss (p. 5), and Heine's "Memoiren."

² Zunz, "Synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters," vol. i. pp. 348-356.

that a man who with the sword of Charlemagne, as he said, in his right hand, proclaimed liberty, equality, and fraternity, who invited the Jews to take their place as French citizens in a conquering empire, and who beat down their enemies, whether Ritterthum or Pfaffenthum, under his feet, should have roused the keenest enthusiasm in a people to whom hero-worship is the grandest of traditions. Napoleon was to be their Moses and their Judas Maccabæus. He had set them free from the yoke of the Gentiles; and though he laid heavy contributions on the cities in which they dwelt, and did not spare them any more than the rest of mankind, they were well content, knowing that ignorance and ferocity could not hurt them while he ruled. Not only was it a change of servitude; it was the end of a dismal epoch which had lasted from the days of Titus and Hadrian. No wonder that his Hebrew subjects addressed the new Emperor in the language of their Testament, with high felicitation, and a warmth that knew no bounds.

But even the Germans, defeated over and over again in their Kaiserlich uniform, welcomed the ideas of the "Great Nation." In Rhineland especially, whither something of the French spirit has always made its way, the Holy Roman Empire was a name which called forth no enthusiasm. And though the Electors, Karl Theodor, Maximilian, Joseph IV., and Duke William of Bavaria had governed upon what were called "enlightened principles," there was but faint lamentation when, on March 20th, 1806, William abdicated in favour of Joachim Murat, who became, for the time being, Grand Duke of Berg. It is not unpleasant to remember the well-meant efforts of Murat, a rough but open-hearted cuirassier, to make his people happy and to win their affections. Where it was possible he stood between them and Napoleon, lightened the burden of conscription, aided manufactures, and demeaned himself as a German Prince, to whom the Confederation of the Rhine was not merely the title of a French province, but a more or less independent union of States.

However, in the summer of 1808, Murat received further promotion in the shape of the crown of Naples;

and on March 3rd, 1809, the so-called Duchy was bestowed on the little Prince Royal of Holland, known to later generations as Napoleon III. Long afterwards Heine, to spite his German kinsfolk and flatter the then occupant of the Tuileries, took a malicious pleasure in describing Louis Napoleon as his "lawful sovereign," whose principality on the Rhine had been forcibly occupied by the Prussians but never ceded to them.¹ Under the personal rule of the Emperor, which now ensued, the last remnants of feudalism were swept away, the Code Napoléon was introduced, schools were set up on the French pattern, the nobles were allowed to marry peasants, and, in short, a new world began to rise on the ruins of the old. It was a stirring time for the "German Michael," who had fallen asleep for a century or two, since about the date of the Westphalian Peace, and who required to be well shaken before he would open his eyes and look round about him. The beating of the French drum roused him at last, and those who, like Heine, were boys in the time of Napoleon, never quite lost the impetus which was then given to them.

With many humorous touches, Heine has told us of his schools and schoolmasters; of his first lessons in the alphabet under the bespectacled Frau Hindermans, where he was the only boy among a dozen girls; of his attendance at the Jewish school of Herr Rintelssohn in company with his fast friend Joseph Neunzig, whose father was a brewer and baker living a few doors off in the Bolkerstrasse; of the little Wilhelm von Witzeski, whose real name was Fritz, and who, in trying to rescue a kitten from the water at Harry's request, was drowned near the Franciscan convent; of his German master at the Lyceum, the Rector Schallmeyer, formerly a Jesuit, to whose free-thinking lessons in philosophy Heine chose to attribute some of his scepticism; and of the Abbé Daulnoy, whose efforts to teach his refractory pupil the French equivalent for *der Glaube* as *la religion* have set all the world laughing since they were described in the "Reisebilder."

Nor are there wanting fanciful arabesques to set off these school histories, the most famous among them being

¹ "Geständnisse," vol. xiv. p. 235.

the legend of Harry's boyish courtship of Josepha, the headsman's pale-faced but lovely daughter, who was niece to the "Witch of Goch," and in whose company he listened to tales of horror and of the grimmest folk-lore from the wrinkled lips of the aunt. This Josepha it was who secretly watched the burial of the sword which had cut off a hundred heads—a mysterious ceremony performed at midnight, in the midst of a solemn wood, by the executioner and his assistants, all in red mantles. Heine says the sword was dug up again by the witch of Goch and employed in her incantations. Of all this we may believe as much as we find amusing. And generally, it is to be remarked that the poet indulges the traditional privilege of his craft, "to lie pleasantly," like Mendez Pinto, and is not to be believed on his oath, unless corroborated from an independent source. He would have agreed with Bacon, "But I cannot tell, this same truth is a naked and open daylight that doth not show the masks and mummeries and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candlelights." There is large expenditure of "candlelights" in Heine's reminiscences.

Sketching his *curriculum vitæ* in a sober document to Professor Hugo at Göttingen in 1825, when he was to take his degree in Canon and Civil Law, he narrates, without a smile, that his father's name was the romantic-sounding Siegmund—we have seen that it was Samson,—and that the old man had served in the army, as after a fashion he had—viz., by following the commissariat. In like manner he varied the date of his own birth according to fancy, and spoke of himself as among the "first men of the nineteenth century," when writing the autobiographical account for Philarètes Chasles, which we read in his works.¹ To make a serious charge of these flourishings and *capriccios* would be absurd. What they prove is the unconquerable disposition of their inventor to play with everything he touched, and to pull it into the shape suggested by his imagination. He was so far of the medieval temper that he could never write or rehearse a history, but only a legend. He preferred his *vinum dæmonum* to the clearest water.

¹ Vol. xiii. p. 5.

His was not a scientific mind; and there is no doubt that he could be false and perfidious, though with the naïve mischievousness of a child rather than the deliberately planned malice of the grown man.

He read, as he tells us in an exquisite page, Tieck's version of "Don Quixote," and never lost the impression which it made on him. He underwent "much Latin, birching, and geography"; studied "Gulliver's Travels," and discussed Spinoza and Rationalism with a yellow-faced, precocious boy, whom some called the "herring philosopher," because he seldom had anything but herrings to eat, and some "the atheist," because he did not believe like his companions. Meanwhile great events were hurrying forward. The French Empire was falling, after thousands of young men from the Fatherland had perished on foreign battlefields, or amidst the ice of the Beresina, and the ancient dynasties were raising their heads once more. On November 10th, 1813, three weeks after the "Battle of the Nations" at Leipzig, an advanced guard of Russian dragoons occupied Düsseldorf. Then came Waterloo, *Und der Kaiser, der Kaiser gefangen*, as Heine sang in the first of the moving lyrics which made his name known. But in 1815, among the youth of the *Tugendbund* or Virtuous Brotherhood, we find the poet himself enrolled. He was not brave by temperament; and though he fought three duels in the course of his earthly pilgrimage, they were all forced upon him. Joseph Neunzig, his young school friend, marched out of Düsseldorf on campaign, but "Red Harry" and most of his comrades stayed on duty at home. Once, in May 1812, he had seen Napoleon riding through the Allee of the Prince's Gardens in his native town, "the eyes of eternity set in an imperial marble face." He was on his way to Dresden, to Borodino, to Moscow. *Morituri te salutant*, writes Heine, of the Old Guard, whom he saw around the mighty man—*les pensifs grenadiers* Hugo has called them, and by a curious coincidence the German poet almost translates him in his own description, *so schauerlich ergeben, so mitwissend ernst*. He would hardly have faced them at La Haye Sainte had he been there.

Instead of combating at Waterloo, he was taken by his

father in 1815 to the Frankfort Messe, or Fair, and entered as clerk, without salary, *Volontär*, in the bank of Messrs. Rindskopf. He stayed there two months, and came home again. "Heaven knows," he remarked to his brother Gustav some years before his death, in telling the story, "I was quite willing to become a banker ; it was often the wish of my heart, but I could never succeed in it. I have long been convinced that the government of the world is destined to be theirs by-and-by." However, he saw the interior of the Frankfort Jewry, which he has painted with terrible truth in the "Rabbi von Bacharach"; and he caught a glimpse of the revolutionary critic and journalist, Ludwig Börne, whose life he was afterwards to write in his peculiar fashion and to his own lasting discredit.

But how could he live at home? His parents were not rich; he had no friends except in the narrow Jewish circle at Düsseldorf, and the Restoration—which German Liberals, from their experience of Prince Metternich's power and persecutions, were wont to call the reign of Mitternacht—was now closing to him and those of his religion the avenues which Napoleon's cannon had burst open. His uncle Solomon was, meanwhile, a thriving man at Hamburg. Thither went the unwilling nephew, to set up a house of commission for English manufactured goods, under the style and title of Harry Heine & Co., which, as might have been expected, came to a speedy end in the spring of 1819. There is something irresistibly comic in the picture of Heine selling Manchester cotton goods on commission. Hamburg he hated ever after; and the ludicrous description of its ways and its people, with the powerful vignette of Hamburg in winter which we may read in Herr von Schnabelewopski's "Memoirs," are proof that he had suffered, as only a poet could, in that grim prison of the soul. "Well I understood," he exclaims, as he thinks of it all, "that the stars are no beings of love and sympathy, but glittering deceptions of the night, everlasting false visions in a dreamt-of Heaven, golden lies in the dark-blue Nothing." He compared himself to the swans he saw there, "the fair white swans with broken wings," which swam round and round the

fast-freezing waters, crying piteously, till they died of the wintry cold.

Not without reason did he lament. The great god Pan, of whom Mrs. Browning sings, was to make a poet of Heine, a reed full of wild music and shivering passion, in the way which he has taken with all poets, by stripping him to the heart. Heine fell in love. But his love was more than crossed—it was flung back with disdain, and the lady married another. Who was she? has been the inquiry, not of critics alone, who are privileged or compelled to ask impertinent questions, but of the thousands in many lands to whom Heine's songs have become the echo of their own experience. At that comic, yet not wholly absurd institution of the Germans, an "æsthetic tea," many a time and oft must have been heard the conjectures of his feminine admirers concerning the "angel's head on a ground of gold and Rhine wine," which shines above Heine's verses, beautiful but unattainable to his desire, like Beatrice above the Inferno of the Florentine. Her remembrance haunts him like a ghost. She is Zuleima, the converted Mooress, with whom Almansor flings himself down the rocks. She is Donna Clara; and invites the doomed Don Ramiro to her wedding. She is a water nixie, and looks at him with sea-green eyes like his cousin Ottilie. She has the features of the dead Maria, and glances at him out of a picture of Giorgione's. She sends him bad dreams, and he laughs at her faithlessness and frosty civilities, and at himself, and at the stupid young man she has married; and it is all in vain: the poet is but a fool, with passion gnawing his vitals; he cannot get quit of it, and he lives and sings as to a vampire which sucks out his heart.

What is peculiar in all this, as every reader will acknowledge, is that Heine did not invent the story and dress it up, as other even great poets have done, but that he lived through it in fact, and that his verses are an autobiography. Nevertheless, we cannot take them as a mere transcript from life; the true poet never transcribes—he transforms. In the glowing fire of genius the clay turns to crystal, the dull hues of earth are heightened into rainbow colours, transparent and delicate. We must speak

of influences working on a sensitive, passion-struck spirit, and not be too curious to follow the thread of history, which is never, in men of Heine's stamp, an Ariadne clue. Zuleima, Agnes, the spectral Maria, Josepha the headsmen's daughter,—these are phantoms, not simply of the young lady at Hamburg, who did not care for Harry Heine, but of his ideal, *Das Ewig-Weibliche* in Goethe's famous phrase, of which all poets sing. It is the universal truth of Heine's ballads which so powerfully affects his reader; the beauty and the love answering to it; the scorn which follows the love; the hopeless melancholy and ruin of a life; the flower that stings, the magic that allures and destroys; the old old story of Ἔρως, ἀνίκατε μάχην, exemplified once more and interpreted by a heart which could read its own secrets, not merely feel or suffer,—this, and not the chronicle of days and hours, or an entry in the parish register, that keeps the world intent.

However, if we will insist on the prose record, it may be found in a letter of Heine's to his friend Varnhagen von Ense, dated October 19th, 1827.¹ The lady was his cousin Amelia (Amalie), third daughter of Solomon the banker, and was about his own age, for she was born in 1800. She did not love her cousin from Düsseldorf, of whom her father afterwards remarked in character that, "if the young fool had learned anything, he need not have written verses." But neither was she destined to marry the man whom she did love. When Heine was at Berlin, in the summer of 1821, he received the intelligence that his "little cousin," as he called her in his verses, had been betrothed to a man of property, John Friedländer of Königsberg. Years after, he dwells with a strangely pathetic mixture of sarcasm and regret, on that May Day when the news was brought to him.² But his "Sorrows of Werther" had begun much earlier, as his poems bear witness.

In 1819, on the failure of his attempt to sell English goods on commission, Heine, by the assistance of his uncle, matriculated as a law student at Bonn. He made there the acquaintance of Simrock, well known since by his translations from the Icelandic and his study of the

¹ See Proelss, p. 41 *seqq.*

² Vol. xvi. p. 199.

Northern Mythology. Others who have acquired more or less celebrity among his intimates, were Dieffenbach and Hoffman von Fallersleben. But his best friend, though Heine afterwards mocked and flouted him with the greatest ingratitude, was A. W. von Schlegel, the founder of Sanskrit studies in Germany, a lover of literature in the widest sense, and distinguished beyond any professor then living at the University by his European reputation and high acquaintance. Heine's description of him in the lecture-hall, irresistibly amusing as it is, cannot disguise the fact he "imposed," as the French say, not a little on the young Hebrew, who was far more interested in the Nibelungen Lied than in Gaius and the Pandects.³ "By-and-by," says the graceless poet, "I cudgelled my master and ran away from school." But the sonnets which he dedicated to Schlegel in the "Buch der Lieder" remain as a testimony of more reverent sentiments on the one side, and of kindness on the other. Heine had brought from home a collection of "Dream-pictures," or songs and romances, which he now completed, adding to them the "Sonnets in Fresco," dedicated to his friend Christian Sethe. In September 1820 he journeyed on foot through Westphalia; and a month later he was enrolled at Göttingen, again as a law student.

Concerning that deadly-lively place, the Georgia Augusta, with its "999 hearthstones, various churches, lying-in hospital, observatory, university-prison, library, and beer-cellar, where the beer was uncommonly good," he has delivered his soul in some of the most laughable pages of the "Reisebilder." Those who for their sins have made experience of foreign universities conducted on the plan of Göttingen, will acknowledge that the picture is not a whit overdrawn. Caricature in such cases becomes impossible. The dust, the pedantry, the dryness moral and physical, to be relieved by no liquor how good soever from the Rathskeller; the "wandering of the nations," which in the shape of Teutons, Saxons, Thuringians, and Vandals, divide into factions, and fight the absurdest of duels about nothing; the professors, immovably fixed like the pyramids of Egypt,—it is all

¹ Vol. vi. p. 126.

a sad, familiar experience, at the thought of which one cannot blame that Cambridge student who, suffering lesser things, on beholding the algebra paper set for him, *cohorruit et evasit*. Heine did not abscond, but he "cut his lectures," and went on studying German metre. He saw little of his professors, and not much more of the raw young men whose chief delight was noisy disputing and the duelling consequent thereupon. Unluckily, in one of these childish quarrels he found himself obliged to challenge a certain Wiebel to fight, "with pistols," for words spoken across the dinner-table. The authorities interposed, and, with a gravity which would extort laughter from a dying man, decided various points of law and honour which arose in the course of the proceedings. The pistols never got themselves discharged; but Heine, being a mere plebeian, was rusticated for six months. This, in German Latin, is denominated *consilium abeundi*. In February 1821 he betook himself to Berlin. As a law student, no less than as a lover, his course was not to run smooth.

What he saw and studied in his new abode we may read in his lively "Letters from Berlin." He led a somewhat wild life; and the acquaintance which here began with Rahel and the circle to which she introduced him was his chief acquisition, not law or literature. Under her roof he met Fouqué, whose "Undine," alone of the many romantic stories he published, keeps the classic fame which was then prophesied for all of them; Chamisso, the creator of Peter Schlemihl; Willibald Alexis; Michael Beer, the brother of Meyerbeer,—it is hardly worth while to continue the catalogue. None of these could forward Heine's plans or enlarge his genius. He was by no means lionised, though he had begun to publish his poems. Small and undistinguished, silent in company, distant, and, in the happy phrase of Elise von Hohenhausen, "a sort of himself incognito," he did not shine for the multitude. Neither the "tavern life" which he indulged in with Grabbe and Devrient, nor the drawing-room existence at Madame von Varnhagen's, was the sphere of a poet. It was all, as he writes to a friend, "mad, waste, cynical, disgusting." Now, too,

his cousin Amelia was married; and while Philistines, male and female, walked through the fields in their Sunday best, and with blinking eyes observed "how romantically all was blooming," he drew his blind, and waited in his lonely chamber till the ghost of his old love came thither silently, and sat down by him to weep over the past.

But his fame was beginning. In February and March 1817 he had published in the "Hamburg's Wächter" some of his earliest poems, including "Don Ramiro." From Göttingen he had sent a proposal to Brockhaus of Leipzig to bring out a volume of verse, which was not unnaturally declined. Now, at Berlin, in 1821, thanks to Varnhagen, some contributions of his were received in the *Gesellschafter*, edited by Gubitz; and in the December of the same year his first "Gedichte" appeared. They were eagerly read and criticised. His "Letters from Berlin," and the slight sketch of a tour in Poland, already gave promise of the "Reisebilder" in their strong, defiant, and picturesque style. From the outset Heine made enemies. His poetical manner found imitators or parodists at once; and there were all the usual signs that a genius had suddenly emerged among the crowd of mediocrities. In November 1821 Heine published scenes from his tragedy "Almansor," in Gubitz's journal. Eighteen months later, in April 1823, the completed work, with "William Ratcliff" and the "Lyrical Intermezzo," came out. We need not dwell on the "Tragedies." They are of very unequal merit; and although "Almansor" has some fine passages and a pathos of which we are reminded in George Eliot's "Spanish Gypsy," it is evident that Heine had none of the dramatic inspiration which his theme demanded. He could not write a story even in prose; the meteoric flashes of his wit, the wanton humour, the ever-changing fancy which made him a lyric and a satirist, would have been fatal to the epic majesty, and were difficult to reconcile with a firm, continuous hold of character, without which tragedy becomes a heap of fragments. When the poet knew more of himself, he forsook the tragic muse. But in those early days he was proud of "Almansor."

Before we speak of the qualities displayed in this new prose and verse, which, appearing in the declining age of Goethe and of Romanticism, took all Germany by storm, we may as well finish the chronicle of the poet's stay in the Fatherland. His people were steadily going down in the world. They left Düsseldorf and settled in 1822 at Lüneberg, whither Heine followed them from Berlin. He lived a solitary life at home, writing and reading, but by no means happy. Relations with his Hamburg kindred were never easy; his uncle Solomon did not know what to make of the ugly duckling with whom neither poultry nor geese could keep on good terms. All this while he was supposed to be preparing for the struggle of life, but he was writing some of the most melancholy, charming, and bitter verses of the "Buch der Lieder." In 1824 he matriculated a second time at Göttingen; and henceforth busied himself with "law and headaches," with the "Rabbi von Bacharach," and more poems. He laughingly complained to Moses Moser, one of the circle of Berlin Jews with whom he corresponded, that he had not the talent to be a genius; *se faire valoir* was the secret of Goethe's success, and the want of it would prove to be his own ruin.

The famous Hartzreise was a vacation tour undertaken in September 1824; its description, which forms the first and unquestionably most taking chapters of the "Reisebilder," came out, again in the *Gesellschafter*, in January 1826. It was in the course of the same holiday that he visited Goethe at Weimar, and impertinently told the great Olympian that he thought of writing a "Faust" of his own. And while his book was publishing, the young poet, driven to it by his uncle, underwent an indifferent examination in his law studies, received a diploma from the illustrious Hugo which dwelt rather on his lyric than his juristic achievements, and was made *Doctor Utriusque*, J.U.D., as he signed himself in the comically solemn petition which he afterwards addressed to the German Bund in deprecation of their harsh edict against him. On the eve of his promotion as Doctor of Laws he had with equal reluctance and cynical contempt of himself, as of the society which required it, gone through the ceremony, "the entrance-ticket to European culture," he said, of

being baptized. The minister, as we know, was Herr Gottlob Christian Grimm. Heine was registered as Christian John Henry. The place, St. Martin's, Heiligenstadt, is a few miles from Göttingen, and we may be sure that the proceeding was very private. His correspondence, and more than one stanza written at this time, show the intense disgust with which Heine thought of his apostasy, for it was nothing else. He had not lived like an orthodox Jew; but he was in no sense a Christian. If the law, he said, did not forbid the stealing of silver spoons, he would never have undergone baptism. In the sequel, his baptism brought him no silver spoons. It made him hateful to both parties; he received no appointment at the University, and in German circles he was as much a Jew as ever.

He attempted to practise law at Hamburg, and failed; made a short journey to London, and detested England ever after; spent an occasional month at Norderney, and learnt to describe the sea as no other German has done; found a publisher who became his lifelong friend, and sometimes hard paymaster, Julius Campe; travelled to Munich, and there, in company with Menzel and others, undertook a literary journal which came to nothing; and in 1828 escaped for a while into Italy, where he saw Milan, Lucca, Florence, as he describes them in the second volume of the "Reisebilder," and was called home by a presentiment of his father's death, which followed soon after. His mother retired to Hamburg on a small pension allowed her by Solomon Heine. One brother, Gustav, settled in Austria; another, Maximilian, in St. Petersburg. After various wanderings from Hamburg to Berlin and Potsdam, and a short stay in Heligoland, Heine himself now turned his thoughts towards France, where the Revolution of July had broken out. His last volume had been forbidden in Prussia. On May 1st, 1831, he crossed the Rhine at Strasburg, and two days later was on his way to the "New Jerusalem" of modern thought. Henceforth he was to be a citizen of Paris.

We may pause here to consider the quality of those first volumes, the "Buch der Lieder" and the "Reisebilder," which made Heine's sudden fame, and the

freshness and originality of which he never surpassed. Perhaps there is no truer criticism of them than the words which, in the "*Romantische Schule*,"¹ are applied to Sterne :

He was the foster child of the pale tragic Muse. Once, in a transport of gruesome tenderness, she kissed his young heart so mightily, so passionately, with such fiery absorption, that it began to bleed, and all at once to understand all the sufferings of the world, and to be filled with infinite pity. Poor young poet's heart ! But then the younger daughter of Mnemosyne, the rosy goddess of laughter, came quickly running, took the aching child in her arms, and strove to cheer him with mirth and singing ; and she gave him for a toy to play with the comic mask, and the bells on the fool's cap, and soothingly kissed his lips, and printed on them all her lightness, all her defiant pleasure, all her witty mocking. And ever since his heart and his lips are in strange contradiction ; and many a time when he is tragically moved, and he is fain to pour out the deepest feelings of that bleeding heart, then, to his own astonishment, from his lips come forth the most amusing, the most laughable sayings.

Here is the poet himself, as in a figure. He was no philosopher, if we mean thereby an adept in formulas and abstractions. To these "airy nothings" he must give a local habitation and a name ; he must see them with the inward eye of fancy, and shape what he sees in language. Heine attended Hegel's lectures at Berlin, nor can we doubt the affinity between his view of things and that of the modern Heraclitus. The "dialectic sharpness," often resulting in epigram and picturesque antithesis, in Heine's writings, which Strodtmann attributes to the Hegelian training, is certainly there ; even as the spirit of contradiction, made as startling as possible, plays no small part in the *Identitäts-Philosophie*. But there is a world of difference between the dry sophistries, the repulsive scholasticism of Hegel, and the symbolism at once naïve and plastic which delights us in Heine. It is the contrast between anatomy and painting. Imagery was Heine's natural medium of expression. In him it is often grotesque, gathered, so to speak, from the four winds, sometimes gigantic as the mad humour of Aristophanes, then delicate, touching, and idyllic in the sense which we

¹ Vol. vi. p. 231.

moderns have given to the simpering word of the Watteau period—that is to say, taken from the wide unconscious world of sea and land, of sunset and sunrise; in short, of the “Prometheus Unbound” and of “The Excursion.” Again, it becomes satirical and biting, and as various as the men and women whom he had brushed against in his wanderings. Heine is no Shakespeare moving along a mighty stream, in which the imagery itself flickers like a rainbow on deep waters, and the thought is so great that we hardly take note how perfect is the form. This man will have us take note of it; he works in mosaic and enamel; the vivid colours, burnt in at one heating, solicit our gaze, and we cannot pass them by.

Is he not a true descendant, herein, of the Ezekiels and the Isaiahs, each of whose words is a picture, almost a hieroglyphic? The flowing eloquence, the wealth of particles and rounded periods which we appear to inherit from the Aryans, are utterly opposed to these Dantean strokes. Heine could never write a book; but, if we may so express it, he could finish his fragments to admiration. His thought does not grow, it leaps or dances. Hence perhaps its extraordinary liveliness. He utters a feeling, a laugh, a sneer which turns and rends his own bosom; and then he is away to something different. Every page sparkles when it does not sob with passion. But, like a child, Heine cannot be steady. He is all moods and fitfulness. His best poems are his shortest, and of these again the most exquisite are songs of not many verses, such as “Du bist wie eine Blume,” “Das Meer hat seine Perlen,” “Ich hab’ dich geliebt und liebe dich noch,” “Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam,” “Die Lorelei,” and how many more! The lovely romance-breathing poems in the “Hartzreise” are ballads which may be set to music. And a whole cycle of passionate scenes, capable of being moulded into such a “Romeo and Juliet” as even the author of the “Gretchen Episode” in “Faust” might have envied, is represented in detached songs, in lyric moments which shine and glow, but which pass while we look on them. There was a reason for such incompleteness in the poet’s creed. He was all impulse, regret, and longing. Life denied

him that which he sought, and he could not rise to a philosophy of renunciation. The light butterfly wings, purple and golden, had dashed into the flame, and the heart was scorched up. No wisdom could teach it that we live by wholesome air, not by flame or fire.

But the lyric poet was also by nature, *vom Hause aus*, a keen wit, a humourist, and, we might even say, of a cool, workaday temperament. Nourished on the romantic diet of the Tiecks and Schlegels, he felt within him the irony they were always boasting of, but never rightly displaying in their productions; he was more at home in it than with the "mixture of Spanish glow, Scottish mist, and Italian tinkling," or the "pictures exhibited by a magic lantern," which marked their school and which he reprobated in some of his earliest pages.¹ He granted that "these romantic images ought to be delightful in themselves"; that they were "the golden keys, of which old stories told, that unlock the enchanted gardens of Fairyland." But medieval Christendom was dead, and to revive it impossible. Ghosts are of the night-time; when they appear at noonday, or in the market-place among the hucksters' stalls, they frighten nobody, and only make themselves ridiculous. Such a ghost was the romantic muse of Uhland, of Rückert even, of innumerable others, who, on the decline of Goethe's "classic-objective" school, and under the influence of the Restoration, had begun to "rave, recite, and madden round the land."

Heine, with the traditional tyranny of genius, confiscated their stage-trappings to his own use, and turned them into very brilliant "property" on the boards he had set up. In his own language, he became *un romantique défroqué*; but it would be much nearer the truth to say that by virtue of his "stand and deliver" the Romantics themselves were *dévalisés*. They lost all they had. Neither Wolfgang Menzel, with his furious attacks on the Government to help him, nor Augustus W. von Schlegel, was a match for the young Titan. He had compared himself to Don Quixote setting out on an heroic quest and finding defeat at the hands of

¹ Vol. xviii. p. 18.

a disguised barber. He was, in fact, Cervantes, who "laughed Spain's chivalry away"; and, it must be admitted, the Romantic Christian, whom these *echt-deutsch* poets wanted to revive, had quite as much the appearance of a spectre, who had lost his way in Covent Garden Market, as ever had the Knight-errant of the Cappa and Spada. Both were deceased and ought to have been at home in their comfortable graves. The Restoration after Waterloo, like chivalry after the invention of gunpowder, belonged essentially to the past; it could not, in spite of all its efforts, ally itself with the present. And Thomas Carlyle, had he been close at hand, would have called it, as he called similar attempts in England, "damnable, dead, putrescent cant."

Too explosive a condemnation, the reader will say! Yes, but true in the main. There was no living by or in the reminiscences of centuries from which men were divided by the Reformation, by the Newtonian astronomy, by the growth of physical science and of industrialism, by the French Revolution itself. Heine resembled a man who, sitting with his Pan's pipe on the mountain-side and making sweet melody, should lay his ear suddenly to the ground and catch the muffled sound of a battle approaching. There was no piping in pastoral serenity after that. His mind became full of the world-wide conflict between the powers that be and those that were to be. We were on the eve, he declared, of the last great War of Liberation, which he likened to the conflict in the Hall of Etzel that closes in blood and horror the Lay of the Nibelungs. The French Revolution would be child's play to it.¹ Such forebodings did not take visible form until he made acquaintance with the Saint Simonians in Paris, but they were already stirring within him, and were strong enough to qualify his unconditional attachment to Romanticism.

Moreover, he was, in spite of himself, always a Jew. He loved and hated his people by turns; but they remained his father's house from which he could not run away by apostatizing. He describes them in one place as the "Swiss Guard of Deism"; in another as

¹ Vol. v. p. 267.

“an ancient evil folk that came out of Egypt, the country of priests and crocodiles,” and he exclaims:

Oh, that Egypt! Its manufactures defy the ages, its pyramids stand as ever unshakeable, its mummies are not to be destroyed! And equally indestructible is that mummy of a Nation which wanders over the world, wrapped in its antique swaddling-bands of the letter, a petrified fragment of universal history, a ghost that amuses itself by dealing in money and old clothes, muttering fearful prayers in which it bewails its sufferings and makes complaint of nations, long vanished from the earth, living only in old wives' tales—and the Jew, amid his anguish, is hardly aware that he is sitting on the grave of those very enemies whose downfall he asks from Heaven.

Neither could Heine disguise his contempt, even while he treated him with poetic sympathy, for Moses Lump, the “dog with the desires of a dog,” who wallows all the week long in the refuse of European life, and on Friday evening sits down to eat fish and garlic sauce with “his squinting wife and yet more squinting daughter.” The Polish Jews who speak “a German fashioned like Polack and bestitched with Hebrew”—the Jüdisch-Deutsch audible in Whitechapel and its neighbourhood—filled him with pity and loathing. “Shall we ever get rid of the old Egyptian disease?” he asks in the “Poems for the Times.” Though he sang of Jehuda Ben Halevi and the Prinzessin Sabbath in passionate strains, he does not hesitate to affirm once and again that he is no Jew—as though the baptismal certificate could unmake his descent from Abraham. But there was another colour in the story.

“A time will come,” cried Edward Gans, “when the question will no more be asked in Europe, Which is Jew and which is Christian?” To that belief Heine clung with intense devotion. He desired simply that his people should share in the universal emancipation. For their ritual and tradition he cared nothing. He laughed at the Liberal Jews of Hamburg and their temple; he felt little interest in the reform begun by Jacobson and Friedländer. Years later, in Paris, he drew away from Börne on the ground that he was full of Jewish fanaticism, even while attached to the revolutionary schemes of Lamennais. Why should he not? A child of the nineteenth century, born under Napoleon, he could never thrust himself back

into that deaf and blind Talmudic tradition which, amid the mouldering dust of a misunderstood Scripture, had kept a whole nation some fifteen hundred years behind the march of humanity. Dead Targums, dead Roman law, dead medieval chivalry! It was a strange world to the poet for whom all things are new. And his Jewish blood revolted against the glorification of the age of Minnesingers. The Suabian "Hep! hep!" sounded yet in his ears. To him, also, the conqueror who dashed ancient Europe to pieces was a saviour, a Messiah. For the same reason he could not refrain in his "Almansor," and in "Donna Clara," from uttering his inbred scorn for the Christian ideals. And here would be the place to speak of that curious and highly interesting movement among the Jews which, beginning, we may say, with Moses Mendelssohn, and rapidly extending after Napoleon's conquests, was carried forward with zeal during Heine's stay in Berlin by such men as Moser, Gans, Immanuel Wolf, and especially by the learned and noble-minded Zunz. It is a chapter of modern history which deserves to be recounted at length, and the outline of which, admirably given by Strodtmann, cannot fail to remind his readers of the parallel movement in the Churches of Christendom.

It was, indeed, a minor current in the great stream which for more than a century has been running with accelerated speed over the lands left dry and barren by the whirlwinds of theological dispute. What Romanticism was to the Christianity which it strove to dress in medieval symbols, that, in certain respects, was the Liberal Hebrew propaganda to the despotism of the Rabbis. But it was a protest even more than a restoration.¹ On its religious or doctrinal side Heine would not touch it; dogma, Jewish or Christian, he cast out; he had a religion of his own to promulgate, with which Judaism of whatever epoch could have nothing in common. But so far as it tended to break down the wall of division between Jew and Gentile, he was heartily in its favour. The "Society for Culture and Science among the Jews," which had been established at Berlin in 1822, and of which he became a member,

¹ Vol. v. pp. 163, 164.

achieved little, and soon fell to the ground, unsupported, as it was, by a single wealthy Hebrew. Edward Gans received baptism, Moser went back to his Sanskrit, and Zunz had to seek in other ways the elevation of his people. But the Liberal tendency continued, and is far from exhausted. Judaism, though exercising its influence in Europe as a race-instinct or financial syndicate, does not any longer imply belief either in Moses or in the Rabbis ; it is traversed by schisms and heresies, on which Spinoza himself, did he return to the world, would look with astonishment. But on this most interesting subject we may not linger.²

Thus, then, Heine came forward as the poet of freedom, who would acknowledge no standard but his momentary feeling, no tradition except for the ends of art—to furnish him with leading “motives,”—and no deity but the passion which he could not resist. Irony, covert or defiant, was the tone into which he struck when his music was sweetest. To be cynical, shameless, sensuous in a degree not often approached in German poetry, was, he deemed, mere obedience to the spirit which drew him on. There is nothing in Byron so ignominious as certain pages, nay, chapters, of the “Reisebilder.” And yet, the writer who thus falls lower than his “enchanted Prince Israel,” and is “a dog with the desires of a dog,” can at other times appeal to us in strains so tender and simple, with such a heartfelt sorrow, and such a freshness, as of the dawn or of flowers wet with dew, that we forget his monstrous improprieties, and are almost willing to forgive them.

It was, however, not the mocking, unclean Heine that took all Germany captive by his song ; it was the romantic, the human poet, who had suffered and was expressing his own and the world’s anguish in words instinct with heavenly fire, in imagery whose colours seemed to have been dipped in the sun. Form and feeling alike were exquisite—and the feeling was so true that it went to the heart. Wit and humour heightened the impression, but they could never have produced it. The later Heine, always a poet, but more and more a mocking one, did not win his audience like the singer of the

² Strodtmann, vol. i. p. 275.

“Lyrical Intermezzo” and the “Heimkehr.” We cannot put on a level with these such compositions, however droll and powerful, as “Germania” and “Atta Troll.” The many have a keen sense of what pleases them, though they cannot tell why; but mere satire does not please them, and never will. Their poetry is of a piece with their religion: it must speak of that which they can love and adore. The greatest singers are not satirists. Homer, Shakespeare, Dante,—do we think of them as “world-mockers” or “Heaven-scaling Titans,” to whom nothing is sacred, and not rather as prophets who have seen into the deeps of joy and pain, coming out thence with immortal light upon their brows of which their poetry is the shining veil? It was well observed by Immermann that Heine, obeying caprice alone, had made himself free, but free to deny and to scorn the beauty outside of him in the universe. There was a canker in the heart of the rose. If nature is not a Divine revelation to the poet, where are his eyes, where the intuitions of his genius?

But already it appeared to Heine that nature answered no questions. To him it was cold and silent. “Tell me,” he asks of the waves, “what is the meaning of man? Whence comes he? Whither goes he? Who dwells on high above the golden stars? But the waves murmur everlastingly, the wind blows, the clouds drive; the stars look down indifferent and cold; and a fool waits for an answer.” To such poetical Nihilism, as it was not unfittingly termed, the necessary sequel is despair, but a conscious gnawing despair which becomes “the pain of the world.” Its poet, or rather its tragic prosaist, beyond all others the century had seen, was Leopardi. Yet Heine differs from Leopardi only because, instead of the single melancholy chord in the Italian lyre, nature had bestowed on him a variety of tones and a sense of colour. The abiding element in Romanticism, its feeling for visible beauty and sublimity, is no part of a despairing creed. Wherever he touches on it, Heine captivates us, and we do not mind his philosophy; he becomes at once simple and unaffected, a child of the gods, straying about their golden halls. That was his first period. As life went on, the charm died away. His last poems have the gloomy

air of verses sculptured within a tomb. They are beautiful and ghastly, like Medusa. "It is the grave itself singing," or the "poetry of Lazarus," said Heine himself—a Lazarus, we are bound to add, without hope of resurrection.

But when he took up his abode in Paris, he did not dream that such days and such singing were in store for him. Not "the pain of the world," but the "rehabilitation of the flesh," a blithe Paganism, instead of Christianity with its Golgotha, was to be his theme. He became the founder of a school, "Young Germany," of which the principle was that "the unconscious harmony between nature and man had been lost; that the last great effort towards its restoration, made by Christendom, had proved in vain," and that a new religion, not spiritual or ascetic, but heathen, sensual, anti-Christian, must enter in to make this world a Paradise.² Heinrich Laube, Wienbarg, Mundt, Gutzkow, and a host of generally foolish and by no means extraordinary young men, who looked upon Heine as their prophet, began to deliver, in the worst style of romanticising German, the burden of their tormented souls.

Gutzkow in particular, choosing for his subject the history of an unfortunate and probably insane young lady, slightly known to Heine—Charlotte Stieglitz—published in 1835 a second-rate novel, "Wally, the Female Doubter," which brought upon the entire school a storm of persecution not wholly unmerited. Young Germany shocked the decorum and troubled the night's rest of Old Germany, which had betaken itself to refreshing slumber beneath the wings of Prince Metternich, and was shortly to welcome the dreamy, pious enthusiast, Frederick William IV. of Prussia. The censorship flourished; spectacles on its nose and a sharp pair of scissors between its fingers, it was busily engaged in slashing and cutting wherever it scented danger to good government or the established religion in the manuscripts which it insisted on overhauling. In England we cannot bring home to ourselves such a serfdom of the press. Our law of libel is severe enough, but we have been spared in this country the sight, which was universal at that time in German

¹ Strodtmann, vol. ii. p. 144 *seq.*

capitals, of an Intelligence Department deciding which works of genius should see the light and which should be strangled at their birth. Heine's struggles with the censor, visible in blank half-pages and truncated sentences, are full of pathos and comedy. When the censorship, like many other institutions, good and bad, disappeared into the gulf of 1848, the poet, remembering to what stratagems it had driven him, affected to mourn over its decease. "It helped one's style so much," he murmured. But in 1835 he was in no humour to laugh. The creature made him feel its claws. Thanks to Menzel, Huber, Stephani, and others, who sprang forward as exceedingly pious defenders of the German people, attacked in their morality by this unbridled school—as of course was true, but *non tali auxilio*,—the authorities in alarm inscribed all these young men, and Heine at their head, upon an everlasting *Index Prohibitorum*.

On December 10th, 1835, the Diet at Frankfort issued a formal decree to this effect, in terms which we cannot read now without wonder and amusement. They were most solemn and peremptory; the consequences were no doubt unpleasant to all who resisted. But in the long run what came of this embargo? "Young Germany" has not succeeded in getting its peculiar Gospel accepted by mankind, or even by that portion of it which dwells between the Rhine and the Vistula. "Wally, the Female Doubter," found few imitators; no æsthetic dame has judged it necessary to plunge a dagger in her bosom as a means of "reconciling man and nature" since that period. Among the authors proscribed there was but one man of genius; and if the rest are unknown to this generation, it is not because the Bundestag condemned them to extinction, but because nature had done so more effectually. Heine's protest on the occasion was not undignified, though certainly not to be named in the same day with such a noble piece of eloquence as the "Areopagitica." It must be confessed, in fact, that the poet was no great hero. He excused himself by saying that it was "necessary to stroke the old wigs" of the Conscript Fathers. It availed him nothing. Many years later, when his failing sight made it advisable to

consult a physician at Berlin, and he asked the King himself, through Alexander von Humboldt, for the needful licence, it was absolutely refused. Not a hero, we have said, but still, not wanting in resemblance to "blind Milton" and "exiled Dante." He returned to Hamburg once and saw his old mother in her poor two rooms; except during that brief visit he was banished from the German land for the rest of his days.

Meanwhile, Heine was winning a reputation in France, not by his poetry, which was, and always will be, untranslatable, but by the brilliant essays which he contributed to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and by his gift of humourous and sarcastic conversation. For the ten years between 1830 and 1840 he wrote little or no verse. His correspondence in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, and such volumes as the fascinating sketch of German literature and philosophy called "Die Romantische Schule," were efforts to make the two nations better acquainted, to soften their prejudices by showing what each possessed that was worthy of being admired by the other. Perhaps the Germans learned something in the course of the experiment. The French, in this respect not unlike the Greeks, were too well pleased with their own achievements to heed the Teutonic barbarians; and much as Heine was esteemed in the literary circles of Paris, there is no evidence that he became known to the nation of French readers, or was reckoned on a level with their native authors. M. Guizot gave him a pension; Théophile Gautier, George Sand, and especially the unhappy Gérard de Nerval, were friends of his; he led the somewhat Bohemian life which was then affected by artists and men of letters in Paris; and he was constantly in want of money and compelled to write for his bread. There can be no question that if his uncle, Solomon Heine, had denied him the annual allowance, amounting to four thousand francs, which he paid him with commendable regularity, the poet might have perished for lack of sustenance, and another Edgar Poe have been added to the Newgate Calendar of authors. At the best of times his income did not exceed seven thousand francs a year. Call it £280; it will not seem princely for the one German

writer who, since the death of the old man of Weimar in 1832, is assured of a place among the world's classics. "What porridge had John Keats?" It is another poet that asks the question, scornfully satirical. Well, if Heine's porridge had not been sweetened by his illiterate kinsman, it would have tasted very bitter, or perhaps have entirely failed him.

Withal he was not himself ungenerous; there are instances, much to his credit, of the help he gave to fellow-exiles and to many whose claims on his charity were more than doubtful. His worst habit was not extravagance, but the light and easy morals which, in accordance with the delusive religion he had taken up, had a singularly degrading effect on his temper and his thought. It was a distracted life. Heinrich Heine in his Parisian time reminds us of Alfred de Musset, the child of Bohemia, who fancied it a fine thing to indulge his animal passions by way of proving how great a genius he was. Boyish caprice, frivolity, ungovernable humour, ingratitude to well-meaning friends, coarse and cynical attacks on his enemies literary and political, a continual sowing and reaping of wild oats,—such was the *Chronique scandaleuse* of this fallen spirit, who in his better moments had shone with an intense and unearthly radiance, but whose sense of ideal beauty was swiftly degenerating into scorn of all things, himself included, as rotten at the core.

He was wanting—we say it with regret—in that "high reason," that serenity born of self-control, without which no poet of the first order can exist. Dantean intensity might be claimed for certain of his terrible fancies, but they come and go like flashes of lightning. There is little sunshine in them. His very strivings after the Greek clearness, the blithe classic temper, are conceived in the spirit of revolt; he does not sit on the heights of Olympus by right divine; he has climbed thither—if we may turn to his own style of imagery—over Sinai and as following the Via Crucis. There is not, we venture to say, one single half-page in his writings which recalls Sophocles or Attic literature. The brightness rests upon storm-clouds; it is not the

delicate Athenian atmosphere, but seems enchanted, tinged with faint colours of medieval Romance, or heavy with the sighs of the innumerable generations that have stood by the Weeping Gate of Jerusalem. When Heine is joyous, he merely affects not to feel a deeper gloom; he never makes us glad as the Greeks will do, or delivers himself from the pain of the world. He is a rebel against the present order of things, not an Apollo or Dionysus descending from the mountain heights into our perplexed and perplexing world, bringing with him gifts of wine and music.

There is pathos in these considerations; but there is something more. The old careless or naïve Paganism cannot be raised out of the tomb. It died long before Christians came to the Empire. And we may as reasonably expect a second Phidias, carving with religious earnestness an Olympian Zeus or an Athena for the Acropolis, as a true Greek poet to arise in these latter centuries. The world to which they belonged is dead; the new race of men have thoughts and feelings too deep for its resuscitation. We laugh at the swains and nymphs, the "machinery" of gods and goddesses that figure in the poems of the age of Pope. Just as artificial in fact, though not in the handling, is the revived classicism of Schiller and Goethe, the erotic Paganism of Heine and of certain well-known English poets and men of letters. In the strict sense of the term, it is a mere dilettante playing with life; it is Della Crusca and the nine Muses at Twickenham or Bath over again.

But although the form of restored Hellenism must needs be artificial, the revolt against Christianity was genuine. That school of which Goethe had been the founder, and of which Heine was now recognised as the head and chief, did not misconstrue its peculiar drift when it preached the "rehabilitation of the flesh." Significant enough are those repeated outbursts, as in the book "*Ueber Deutschland*," against the "Hindu-Gnostic" religion, which, according to the writer's conviction, had dominated Europe under the name of Christianity; which had overthrown or thrust into dark corners the ancient worship of the gods and the Pantheism indigenous to the

German races ; which had transformed Venus, Apollo, and the whole mythology of Greeks and Romans, into devils, evil spirits, cobolds, pucks, and a doctrine of witchcraft and the Blocksberg ; which had made of life a season of penitence, had banished innocent pleasure from the world, had set up for imitation the “dog’s virtue of humility,” had abandoned this world to Cæsar, had made liars and hypocrites of the great mass of mankind, and was now in the last throes of dissolution. It is worth remembering that the date of the volume from which we quote is 1834. Seventy years have passed since these fiery denunciations and stern prophecies were given to the world. Would Heine say that his wishes were nearing their accomplishment ? That is a grave question.

Be the answer what it may, it was Heine’s endeavour, during the second part of his life, to propagate self-indulgence as a religious creed, and he did so vehemently, in a series of essays, poems and letters, until he was stricken down with disease, paralysed in his very lips, reduced to the helplessness of an infant, and imprisoned in the “mattress grave” of which he has sung in his gloomy “Last Poems” with heartrending pathos and self-contempt. The whole reads like a modern version of Prometheus. The pride and defiance are not wanting ; the Oceanides, in the shape of sympathetic female friends, pay him soothing visits, though, as he complains, they go home towards evening ; there is an attempted but ineffectual reconciliation with the Divine powers ; and the rebellious spirit sinks at last amid earthquake and ruin to the deeps. Nor do we fail to catch the sound of ærial strains of melody from time to time, while the tragic events are proceeding. There is a ludicrous or laughter-stirring element also. Heine’s quarrels with his family, his marriage with the *grisette* Mathilde Mirat, his discussions with Börne and estrangement from him, the duel with Herr Straus, his relations with L’Enfantin and the Saint-Simonians, are all treated by the poet himself humourously and set in the most varied lights, not by any means to his credit, but always so as to remind us that gall and bitterness, folly and passion, in such a world as ours, are “big with infinite jest.” It is not the

heart-shaking mockery of a Swift ; Heine could rival the coarseness, but not the power, of that unparalleled genius, in whom the depth of laughter was measured by the gravity of as stern a temperament as ever existed. But round about the mattress grave, separating its prisoner from the men of every day, were those "singing flames"—despairing wit, self-devouring humour, pitiless mockery—with which he threatened the German despots. In his later poems, if he weeps, it is like Satan, a shower of devil's tears which blast the ground they fall upon.

"This world," says Carlyle in a well-known passage, "is properly defined as a place of hope ; without hope we cannot live." But that was the chord on which Heine never struck, which would yield him no music. He merely professed to hope ; it was the flesh with its vices and concupiscences that was made to be immortal. A quarrel about a miserable pension, when his uncle Solomon died, was enough to shatter that life of the body in which he trusted ; and he fell, like a mast snapped in two, helpless for the rest of his existence. No wonder that in his "*Geständnisse*" the dominant thought is borrowed from Julian, "*Vicisti, Galilæe*." As though the finger of an irresistible unseen power had touched him, the little "Aristophanes of Germany" cries out that he is vanquished by an irony with which he dare not compete.

The history of his last years has been often written.¹ It was one of increasing pain, monetary embarrassments, and the monotony of a sickbed from which friends and acquaintance fell off little by little, though the poet's fame grew greater in all European lands. Meissner, in whose slight "*Reminiscences*" we find an occasional sentence worth quoting, tells us how Heine spoke of himself as already dead, his soul looking down upon the tortured body and pitying it, his mind filled with pictures and images from the past. He was eager to write and to sing, but "the blind eye, the unsteady hand, the ever-returning pain," made it impossible. He was carried to and fro like a child. Opium alone could give him relief, and he often lay as one dead, in a continued swoon.

His wife, an illiterate but cheerful and loving creature,

¹ The best in Proelss, pp. 277-359.

whom he had married at St. Sulpice, August 31st, 1841, after they had been living some four years together, was wholly devoted to him. And in their narrow two or three rooms on the third floor, furnished with no luxury, the only prospect from which was into a high-walled yard, they lived year after year on the allowance which Solomon Heine made them, eked out by the poet's bargains with his publisher. Not a brilliant existence, assuredly ! He had seen his mother for the last time at Hamburg in July 1843. By a pious fraud she was never permitted to suspect his illness, and he continued always to send her cheering letters, which testify to his affection better than the somewhat perverse jesting about her early plans for him, to which he yields in the posthumous "Memoiren."

For eight years Heine lay dying. Did he change his manner of thought, and become a sincere Christian, as in those days was often rumoured ? It is hard to say. The creed of self-indulgence had broken down, he openly confessed it ; but it does not follow that he put any better in its place. Rather, the cynical scepticism, which always lay at the bottom of his thinking, came to the surface ; and he jested, and shook his cap and bells, in sight of eternity, with a look half-frightened, as might a clown on the stage who feels that he is dying but must play his part, must utter the conventional jests with trembling lips, on which the falling tears mingle with the paint, and turn his very spasms to the spectators' amusement. In a letter to George Weerth, of November 1851, he professes his belief that the poet, while comprehending the "symbolic idiom" of religion and the "abstract mechanic jargon" of philosophy, stands in need of neither. But even poetry almost failed him at the last. For wit and satire and persiflage, though expressed in rhythmical form and with the sharpness of Archilochus, who stung his enemies to death by singing, is in no degree what we mean by poetry. There is an ideal, a reconciling or purifying element, without which the highest technical verse becomes prose. Heine little by little saw the romantic glow and colour dying out of his inward sky, and the heavens descend, like a darkness which might be felt, upon his aching head and flaccid wasted limbs. And

the bursts of scorn and mockery which break upon the ear from out that gloom,—how shall we find in them the “seed of light” which alone makes poetry for mankind? The luxuriant fulness of existence, the vines growing amid the yellow-eared corn, were changed to a handful of grave-dust, a hand’s-breadth of space between the coffin-boards; and though God and revelation and immortality might be mocked away, “Time the shadow, Death the skeleton,” could neither be reasoned with nor mastered.

The contrast in Heine’s poems, when we compare his first exquisite songs with the “Lazarus idyls” which fill the “Romancero” and the “Letzte Gedichte,” seems as great as can be imagined. But there is a logical, or more truly a vital connection between these different phases of his spirit. All is impulse, indulged or thwarted, still hoping to satisfy itself, if only with the husks of the “Hegelian swine,” or furious and despairing when the senses which ministered to it in the heyday of the blood are paralysed and no longer obey its call. Life, it has been said, resembles the “Iliad”; it is a bas-relief which breaks off, not a rounded whole. Heine, and the New Pagans of whom he is the mouthpiece, would have it complete in itself, and harmonise with the faculties of our lower nature. But in so thinking they make of it a prison, whose only door of escape is into the “white abyss.” Can we handle death sceptically? Critics have fancied that Heine’s affected or real conversion to Deism was no more than a last revolt against the powers that be, as though he would appeal from the visible dissolution, which he could not resist, to the hope of immortality in which he had never felt any confidence hitherto. It may be so. At all events the thought paints the man. He was a universal *frondeur*, who could never be resigned, and by instinct was a destroyer of what had been built up.

He died February 17th, 1856, and was buried at Montmartre, with scant ceremony. The scene recalls that dismal page in “Le Père Goriot,” which might have suggested it. Heine’s word was fulfilled, “Keine Messe wird man singen, Keinen Kadosch wird man sagen.” He was neither Jew nor Catholic; he was not a Lutheran

Christian, except in the catalogue. He belonged to that tribe of Europeans who have cast off religious beliefs like a worn-out garment; who go down to the grave like dogs, or, what is still more nauseous, amid the cut-paper flowers of rhetoric, one long-winded orator after another stepping forward to the edge of the pit, and there gesticulating and perorating with the fluency of a Paris Town Councillor. But he preferred silence to this *Hundebellen*. And we cannot blame him. The silence was significant of many things.

Of this, surely, among the rest. That here was a musical soul, which in better times, or in heroic obedience to the faith it scorned, might have filled its generation with melody, kindled hope, lightened a thousand hearts, and drawn to itself unspeakable love and veneration. But that, thanks in large measure to the corrupt society into which it was born, no such undying melody came from it. Heine was perverse and sensual, a blackamoor whom no washing, seven times repeated, will make white. For the abuse of his transcendent gifts he must answer at a higher judgment-seat than man's. Nevertheless, when we reflect on the conditions of his bringing up, on the great and small tyrannies under which he lived in his native land, on the Paris of Louis Philippe to which he was banished, on the absence of a sovereign Christian ideal, whether of individual or social existence, in the Europe of half a century ago, we shall recognise that he did not fall simply by his own hand.

Heine saw in Christianity a code of repression, as he deemed, consecrating established injustice, condemning the millions to fruitless toil, giving the substance of good things to the rich, and bidding the poor be content with a shadow and a promise. That he did not read the Christian message aright is not a point on which we can now enlarge. Suffice it that multitudes in every land have read it pretty much after the same fashion. He was a Jew, and he hated the medieval system under which his people were still groaning. But he was a modern also, and it appeared to him that Napoleon had cleared the ground for a new order of things in which Christianity was to have no place. What could be devised in its stead? A religion of pure

Humanity, was his reply, as it was that of Saint Simon, Comte, Feuerbach, and many others. But the question of questions returned, as it always will return, "Quid est homo?" What is man? What will satisfy him? what will make him perfect, carry him along the upward path, save him with an everlasting salvation? Heine answers, in effect, "to throw the rein on the neck of his lusts"; and he called this license Hellenism, Pantheism, and all manner of fine-sounding names. But experience gives it the lie. If there is no better "Religion of Humanity" than we discover in the poems of Heine, we may close the volumes with a conviction that Pessimism, not Hellenism, is the last word of a philosophy in accordance with facts. Of course, it may be urged that the poet was no teacher—that he is not to be regarded in a serious light. But we are not concerned with what he meant to teach; our concern is with the significance of his life and writings in themselves, as representative of the age to which they belong, and prophetic of consequences yet to arise from causes now in action, which are so powerfully delineated in the slides, so to speak, of his magic lantern. Was the Romantic poetry a mere dead Christianity decked with flowers? Are the old Greeks, with their worship of sensuous beauty and their "cancerous vices," to live again? Will the twentieth century witness a struggle between those who desire to "rehabilitate the flesh," and the stern revolutionists whose cry is "*Du pain et pas de longs discours*"? Or is there possible a resurrection of Christian principles, now held by rote, an application of them to the State, to industry, to the life of the multitudes, which shall make a beginning of the kingdom of God on earth? Such are the questions we cannot but ask ourselves, standing in the dreary churchyard by Heine's grave. One thing he has proved to evidence—that genius without principle acts only as a chaotic force. And a second—that no mere Hellenism will save the world. But there his prophesyings end, and "the rest is silence." Euphorion is shattered to pieces, the poet's garment becomes a winding-sheet, and the broken lyre murmurs the music of an eternal Requiem.

VI

THE MODERN FRENCH NOVEL¹

"THE Drama," it has been said, "is a condensed Novel; the Novel an expanded Drama." If this definition hold good, as we shall assume for the purpose of our present enterprise—which is to enquire, within such limits as our space will allow, into the essential qualities of French novel-writing since the Restoration—it becomes evident at once that the nineteenth century was more in love with the open hand than the clenched fist. Which saying, indeed, is a parable with many meanings for our sympathetic age. But to keep to the application on which we are now intent, dramatic literature, as we may all convince ourselves, has been steadily declining, from Victor Hugo to Victorien Sardou, as in power so in the quality of the genius employed in its creation or its manufacture. The stage, even in Paris, threatens more and more to degenerate into a great spectacular exhibition, or pantomime for grown-up children—a Barnum's Show minus the performing elephants. Scene-painting has usurped the place of passionate, high-reasoned dialogue. *Quidquid agunt homines* is no longer its business. Not what men do, but what actors wear (and actresses do not), has become the principal concern of managers, critics, and audience. It is the hour of so-called Realism. The senses are to be fascinated, while leaving the heart untouched save by gross and violent caricatures of the tragedies of the police-court and the Old Bailey. And the artist's mind, which even yet seeks to be "purified by pity and terror" in

¹ George Sand: 'Œuvres Complètes,' Paris, 1878. Victor Hugo: "Œuvres Complètes," Paris, 1880. Théophile Gautier: "Œuvres Complètes," Paris, 1886.

subordination to the eternal laws of beauty and the sublime, is now in course of banishment from the modern stage, as though it were some poor follower of the *ancien régime*, and therefore could never too much be suspected. In its aims and ideals rarely perhaps was that stage more degraded than at the moment in which we write.

Doubtless, a not unlike catastrophe may be hanging over the Novel. For Materialism is the conquering Anarch of our time. But, in any event, its record will differ greatly from that of the acted drama—in this respect above all, that it is the one form of literature wherein the nineteenth century proved itself daringly original. Since every one “has evolution on the brain,” we may venture to treat the “evolution of the Novel” as a chapter in modern history, not less instructive to the philosophic mind (and a great deal more authentic) than Professor Haeckel’s deduction of man through twenty-two stages from the mythical Bathybius. Romantic literature has, in fact, undergone the most striking development to which any form of art could be submitted—not unlike, as a fanciful observer might suggest, to that whereby woman, the plaything of Oriental luxury without significance for the serious concerns of existence, has been raised to the dignity of a European wife and mother. What was, some hundred years ago, mere story-telling, not distinct in kind from “The Arabian Nights,” or the “enormous lies” of a professional jester, paid to make his hearers laugh, has become a microscopic—one had almost said a scientific—investigation into the modes of the actual breathing life which goes on around us, and an effort to reproduce them faithfully, with adequate force and passion in the recital. The Drama, we repeat, has sunk from the soul to scene-painting. Othello and Shylock suggest to London audiences forms of Venetian architecture and canals with moonlight upon them, rather than the demonic pangs of jealousy, the breaking of a noble heart, or the man-devouring indignation of the persecuted medieval Jew. But with the Novel precisely the reverse has happened; and even those grotesque interpreters of a fundamental canon of art who call themselves “Impressionists” are aware that scene-painting—nay,

photography—should reveal the spirit which looks out through the eyes of flesh. Now of this immense movement, or transformation, the most remarkable outcome, viewed as a whole, is the modern French Novel.

The father and *eponym* of that dramatic prose literature we take to be Jean Jacques Rousseau. Not that the Genevan apprentice, with his malady of day-dreaming, was or could be utterly original. "Clarissa Harlowe,"—the plump, sentimental, heartrending Clarissa,—whose story cannot be read now without tears which one is a little ashamed to be caught shedding, is the true nursing-mother of "La Nouvelle Héloïse," and a far more tragic figure. Richardson, like the unscrupulous Highlander who invented Fingal, has much to answer for in the literature of Europe. His pathos, true or false; his immeasurable sentimentalism, rolling along like the Mississippi in flood-time, his "bourgeois virtues," made an impression upon the French and even the German intellect from the consequences of which they have not yet freed themselves. But to the French Richardson was interpreted by Rousseau, whose *opus magnum* in this kind is not his romance but his "Confessions." They had long been waiting for such a note to be struck. Their prose had already, within certain well-defined limits, attained perfection. Their historians, though not endowed with deep insight, were incomparable *raconteurs*, with an eye for detail and that love of the personal (not to say of the scandalous) which marks the born novelist. To expand a drama, which in Thucydides would have been dismissed in one immortal page, had been their very function. Froissart, the garrulous and delightful; Saint Simon, the austere Jansenist; and Voltaire himself, supreme artist of the merely finite, exhibit in their several fashions the same tendency. It had been the way with the French to portray the general (such "general" as they might comprehend) by means of the particular, to throw history into scenes, to make it *pose*, as they are fond of saying, to heighten its relief by epithet and epigram; and, on the whole, discarding the learned pallium under which they could not shrug their shoulders with moderate comfort or strike an attitude, to

discourse in a *robe de chambre* more or less wittily from Rabelais' easy chair. The medium in which their prose moved had been that of conversation, addressed to a society which was intent altogether on being amused, and was gathered into elegant, well-lighted salons where some great lady held her court, but where Alceste, or any other far-off likeness of Hamlet, would have been essentially out of his element. But the Tacitean lines in Saint Simon and the portraits of La Bruyère,—nay, the disgusting cynical pleasantries of “Candide,”—foreboded a change in the tone of literature. It came with Rousseau, to whom, and by no means to Chateaubriand, as the light-minded Théophile Gautier has asserted, must be ascribed the invention of “melancholy and modern passion.” Or, more accurately speaking, he did not invent them at all, nor could; he did but import them into France.

Meanwhile, these are qualities, let who will have the credit of them, most alien from Voltaire. Him we might call, by an *oxymoron* which has plenty of truth in it, an “Epicurean pessimist”—one, that is to say, who was convinced that “ginger is hot in the mouth,” if only the devil, or some other power equally malignant, were not always snatching it away, leaving one's jaws to grind *in vacuo* till they bring on the toothache. The prevalent tone of “M. Arouet, Junior,” is mockery, not melancholy; he has infinite grace and wit, but eschews, or was incapable of feeling, deep passion—for deep passion implies that there is a good beyond the taste of ginger, be it attainable or unattainable. For Rousseau he felt and has expressed unmitigated scorn. But the mad prophet of Geneva had looked into abysses which Voltaire did but laughingly skirt. Rousseau had enthusiasm, a poetic devotion to solitude, lyrical moods of which the expression in his writings may be compared to sudden flashes of light, or flakes of clear water in “the green mantle of the standing pool.” With his nauseous sentiment and his still more damnable virtue (*sit venia verbo*), were combined gifts of inspiration, and a sort of bastard divine frenzy which appealed—as Joubert, the strict and sensitive Joubert, has been frequent in reminding us—even

to those Christians who turned with dislike or dread from Voltaire's irony. One word will indicate the drift of our remarks. And it is due, as we learn from his conversations with Eckermann, to Goethe himself. It is the word "Romanticism." To the "poisonous reptile" Rousseau, if we do not care with Carlyle to account of him as an "ill-cut serpent of Eternity," the French are indebted for the thing which has since made the round of the world under that designation.

Yes, Romanticism was the beginning which, interrupted by the great Revolution—during which literature went to make cartridges, or was banished, without distinction of sex, in Madame de Staël—has since bloomed out into a forest of the strangest growths, and with the newspaper (which it has invaded in the shape of the *feuilleton*) seems not unlikely to absorb all modern literature, including in that once respectable category advertisements of soap and mustard, now garnishing the yellow backs of our novels, and the circulars of "bogus" companies slipped in between their leaves. But how comes it, the intelligent reader may here throw in, that Romanticism fell wounded, if not slain, by Realism after its great triumphs, and almost disappeared from French as from English fiction? Have we not overlooked the deep gulf which is fixed (by Zola and Company) between ourselves and Rousseau?

Not at all, we make bold to reply. Romanticism and Realism are phases of the same movement, though at first sight they resemble each other as little as the man of fifty resembles the stripling of sixteen. The methods have varied—to speak figuratively, landscape and miniature painting have yielded to the rage for photography; but that is the main difference, and it does not touch the heart of the question. "Sentiment" has developed into psychology; and psychology, under the guidance of Balzac in large measure, has turned to absolute physiology, or the interpretation of character by means of the nerves and tissues—a most significant change, though whether towards heaven or the abyss we do not yet enquire. From first to last the endeavour has been to delineate life as it appears to the national French imagination,

These thousands of novels, which have rained down every year thick as leaves in Vallombrosa, display so striking an identity of principles that it is hardly too much to affirm that one individual, granting the moods of youth and middle age through which he must have passed, might have written them all. And herein lies the significance which they possess for the philosopher as for the historian. What the French of this century have contributed in the shape of literature to the World's Fair, is not a noble epic, or tragedies of melodious rhythm which will linger in the ear of humanity for all time—not chapters of an heroic inspired Bible, but lively speaking pictures of their own existence; of what they have been, or would passionately desire to be. Their Romance is their autobiography. In it we listen to the national Muse rehearsing their feats of war and love, or dreaming aloud and, in her very sleep and foolish moonstruck babble, “holding the mirror up to nature,”—Gallic nature, which we shall do well to bear in mind, is human “with a difference.”

But enough of prologue. Let us strike in at the beginning after Napoleon. The first name is likewise the greatest. When Victor Hugo died, one of the Paris journals opened its *oraison funèbre* on that mixed and mountebank character with a Gargantuan phrase. “Ils ont été quatre,” it began; meaning thereby that three others, of whom Shakespeare might be one, shared with the author of “Notre Dame de Paris” the honour of sitting crowned, “like gods together,” on the topmost heights of genius. Alas! one must mournfully remark of the too-daring critic, how should he know? Was it at all likely that he had read the “precipice-talking” Æschylus, even in a French translation? or had he more than an operatic insight into the “Romeo and Juliet,”—of “Lear” there could be no question,—which is among the lesser things achieved by that “drunken barbarian,” William Shakespeare? The world's literature will recognise Hugo, but hardly among the supreme four. What we must acknowledge in the young hero of the “Battle of Hernani” is a wide-glancing, Titanic imagination, full of lurid lights from below, rather than enriched by

contemplation of the many-sided activities of human existence which in Homer and Shakespeare seem to be reproduced, and their beauty heightened, as in clear azure. His love of children, reverence for old age, fellow-feeling with the outcast and the wretched; his quaint simplicity of manner on occasion, not without a touch of the old and rustic French courtesy; his daring felicities of style; his picturesque language, coloured like the rainbow, metaphorical, abrupt, and violent; his triumphant manipulation of the intractable cast-iron Alexandrine, most wearisome of metres in which the gods ever spoke,—these things have been dwelt upon a hundred times. But it cannot be said that he was the master of a new philosophy, or brought elements which had not been previously working there, into French literature. He did but throw into startling and magnificent forms the principles which Jean Jacques had developed by means of that insistent corrosive rhetoric, eating its way as straight towards its object as a whole swarm of locusts, whereby he beat down rivals and opponents. As a connecting link, however, between Hugo and Rousseau, we must admit Chateaubriand. “He it was,” observes Gautier in the passage to which we have already alluded, “who, in the ‘Génie du Christianisme,’ restored the Gothic cathedral, opened a way into Nature in his ‘Natchez,’ and in ‘René’ invented melancholy and modern passion.”

Now it is clear enough that M. le Vicomte de Chateaubriand invented none of these things; that “the Gothic cathedral” is not absent from Goethe’s “Faust,” of which the grandest fragments antedate by years the French Revolution; and that “nature and melancholy” are somewhat older than “René.” But true it is that Rousseau, had he taken kindly to Catholicism when he was once inside it, might have given us a “Génie du Christianisme” idealised in squires and dames, hermits, missionaries, wind-blown forests and rolling waters, instead of “Emile” and the “Vicaire Savoyard.” And “René,” with its unspeakable subject-matter of incestuous love, is the very “stuff o’ the fantasy” that the Genevese dreamer would have delighted to meddle with. The intense diabolic sadness is common to both. Fruitless

tears, and life overshadowed as with the wings of Satan, who can never heartily laugh, but only sob and grin, and find a heart of evil in all things—such is René, such, too, the hero of the diseased and dissolute “Confessions,” who, when he had had enough of existence, flung it away to the dunghill. Undoubtedly in such portents the “literature of despair,” with its rose-tinted draperies and naphtha lights, might well take its beginning.

What an astonishing time it was! (cries the before-quoted Théophile.) Walter Scott was then in the bloom of success; and we were undergoing our initiation into the secrets of Goethe’s “Faust,” which, according to Madame de Stäel, has everything in it, and perhaps a little more. We were in process of discovering Shakespeare under the more or less patched-up version of Letourneur. And Byron’s poems, “The Corsair,” “Lara,” “The Giaour,” “Manfred,” “Beppo,” “Don Juan,” travelled to us one after another from the East, which had not yet become commonplace. How young, novel, strangely-coloured it all was; how intoxicating, how penetrating was its savour! It made our heads turn; we seemed to be entering upon worlds unknown.¹

From Chateaubriand to Victor Hugo is but a step. Suddenly, in “Notre Dame de Paris,” the Gothic cathedral rises huge and solemn as a dream of the night above the *habitués* of the Boulevards and the fashionable coteries of the Chaussée d’Antin, astonished that for two long centuries such a miracle of frozen music should have stood disregarded in their sight. As a resuscitation of medieval Paris, the otherwise incorrect and fantastic pictures of that morbid romance have been seldom equalled. Now, too, was “Nature’s infinite book of secrecy” struck open in many a place, and a vast panorama of land and sea unrolled before the French spectator with a most weird yet faithful apprehension of the moods they inspire, in those volumes upon volumes of prose and verse, which culminate in “Les Travailleurs de la Mer.” And as for “melancholy and modern passion,” where do they not abound, even to overflowing, in the young impetuous Hugo? “Hernani,” “Lucrezia Borgia,” and the other “condensed Novels,” in which that member of the “unrivalled Four” displays so superb a contempt for history,

¹ Gautier, “Hist. du Romantisme,” p. 5.

owe their fascination in no small degree to the dithyrambic effusions of an instinct which no law, be it of earth or heaven, was permitted to check. The passion in "Notre Dame de Paris" is overwhelming. Nor is it meant to move us less (though in fact it does so) in "Les Misérables," or in "Quatre-Vingt-Treize." For, like the men of "storm and stress" in whose path he followed, Hugo broke from the outset with tradition. The old Drama had forbidden an appeal to unmixed passion. There must be no murdering on the stage, no lacerating of the heart by mere torture. The terrible was not to be hideous but sublime, the grotesque to be kept in subordination to wit and fancy, as in the Shakespearian laughter-moving comedies of Aristophanes. But Hugo flung this *cosmic* idea of art to the winds. He deliberately aimed at a gigantic and constantly repulsive excess, as the only way to escape from conventions. Life and energy, to his feeling, had chaos for their domain; caprice was the only law which he found within them. Outside of them, indeed, was stern necessity; but not even necessity, as here presented, was cosmic or reasonable. Hugo's creations always tend to the monstrous, the unnatural; they are essentially caricatures of experience, not interpretations of it. His scenic effects—take the murder of Jehan Frollo by Quasimodo as a frightful instance—have in them a sort of physical violence. The reader is almost sorry to have submitted his fancy to them, as he would feel degraded if he were to witness an execution from choice. But to the French Romanticists in their high and palmy days it appeared that disorder, carried to the utmost, was the one means of attaining to that enlargement of passion or faculty which, as Schopenhauer has admirably proved, does enter into or even constitute the purpose of art. To crown the absurdity, nothing more was needed than that Shakespeare should be idolised as the god of this chaotic world.

But such art, if it deserves the name, is as little to be found in nineteen-twentieths of the work of our English poet as in the high moments of the Greeks themselves. It may be studied, we grant, in "Titus Andronicus." It fills as with a deadly vapour the tragic stage whereon

“Vittoria Corombona” and the “Duchess of Malfy” were produced to the horror, we must believe, rather than the gratification, of a human audience. But how should we have rated Shakespeare had he produced only dramas of blood and cruelty resembling these, acted in a shambles reeking with gore? Webster and Ford are no favourites whom the English-speaking races have worn in their heart of hearts. It was impossible that they should be. This Hindu manner of reaching the infinite by exaggeration belongs to the infancy of literature as of painting and sculpture. It is but “piling on the agony,” a process which ends, as it ought to do, in making us laugh. And its exhibition in a language like French, the note of which is superficial good-sense, nay, an over-fastidious observance of limits (whereby it has been rendered the most unfit of any modern dialect for poetry), cannot but result in something sublimely grotesque, if not purely extravagant and farcical. The extravagant, frankly proclaimed as such, does not offend. We read Dumas’ “Monte Cristo,” “Trois Mousquetaires,” and other tawdry, mock-heroic imitations of Sir Walter Scott, with toleration, not without amusement. But our amusement in Hugo is not always that which the author intended. Milton has shown us the poet “soaring in the high reason of his fancy, with his garland and singing robes about him,” transcending the commonplace by rising to the Eternal. He would have gravely warned Icarus not to trust in his wings of wax if he desired to soar towards the sun. Hugo’s pinions are too often of this second-hand make, not warranted against increase of temperature, and he comes down, dashed to the ground amid laughter from those who have beheld the true eagle-flights of genius. A French *Æschylus*, not an Athenian; but yet with some terrible strokes of greatness in him.

His method of proceeding is invariable. To disengage, or set in a romantic light, the passions of mankind, he separates them from the moral and reasoning element, apart from which, as philosophers have considered, they become brutish, not human, and therefore no fit subjects for poetry. We may cite in illustration the varieties of love and hate—every one huge, disproportionate, Cyclopean—

which combine in Quasimodo, the misshapen deaf mute, who is the hero of "Notre Dame de Paris." They are like nothing so much as the feelings of a wolf brought up in captivity, amenable to kindness, but never to reason. Was not this Rousseau's "man in a state of nature"—deprived, we must add, of half his senses—in whom the mainspring of activity is pure impulse? "By this good light, M. Hugo," would Trinculo say to his creator, "this is a very shallow monster—a most poor credulous monster." For impulse is not the characteristic of man, but the raw material out of which, with endless pain and effort, he is to fashion, at last, himself—a reasonable nature in harmony with the moral law. But when this "shallow monster," whom we could pity for the wrecked humanity which is in him, proceeds to clasp in his arms the dead body of Esmeralda, and dies embracing it amid the foulness of the charnel-house, we have had enough. Reason feels the shock as though it were asked to believe in the existence of the vampire and the wehr-wolf. "*Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.*" Horace was not the least discerning of critics because he insisted on sound common-sense as the foundation of poetry. These abortions, born of Chaos and old Night, are by no means the lovely wonders which the artist promises to bring forth out of his treasures. They are but chimeras of the fancy, unreal and impotent, and as such the mind rejects them—nay, the gorge rises at them.

In not unlike manner has Victor Hugo dealt with the divinest of human feelings, a mother's love, which, in the wild woman of the "Trou aux Rats," we see transformed into a passion but little differing, so far as quality is concerned, from the attachment a tigress might show towards her cubs. It is painted, doubtless, in terrific colours, by one who understood the tiger heart—as though William Blake had wrought those curiously great verses of his which we all know into a story. The incoherent cries and pleadings of the dishevelled maniac (for she is no more) when her new-found daughter is torn from her arms to be hanged before her eyes, have an unfathomable depth of horror in them. On such occasions is it that

Hugo becomes the "Lord of human tears." But unmixed pathos is not the end even of tragedy. As well might we linger for our gratification by the agonised beds in a hospital ward, as call up tears which bring with them neither light nor strength to man's spirit.

More within the bounds of possibility is Fantine in "Les Misérables." Our heart does indeed go out towards the poor bewildered creature, whom her bourgeois lover forsakes, and the police drive hither and thither, and no honest woman will so much as look at, until hunger and love for her little Cosette, the child of shame, compel her to sell the very hair of her head, the teeth out of her mouth, and then what is left of her, soul and body, in the market of women. A sad, true story! That piercing rays of the sublime illuminate these figures, otherwise pitiful enough, no one will deny who has studied them. Yet it is a sublime which passes quickly into the theatrical, and in the very tempest and whirlwind of its power rings false, like a cracked instrument in some mighty orchestra. What, for instance, are we to think of the love which, swooping down upon the sailor-lad of Guernsey in "Les Travailleurs de la Mer," thrusts him out upon the solitude of waters among the Douvres rocks? It teaches him all manner of shifts and stratagems to raise the foundered vessel, bids him brave the terrors of the sky and the deep, the equinoctial gales and the lurking devilfish with which he does battle. So far the mind of Gilliatt is of a piece with other men's, and we understand its working. His defiant presence in the loneliness of Nature, like a young Prometheus, appeals strongly to us. But this same love it is which, when it can win neither smile nor glance from Déruchette, for whose sake these things were ventured, condemns its victim to go back without a word to the place of his exploits, there to drown himself by inches, in accurate mathematical correspondence to the distance of the boat which is bearing away the unconscious young lady on her wedding-day. Surely this is not to rival Shakespeare's preternatural or subternatural creations, the Ariels and the Calibans, whose feelings are like, not identical with, the human? It is setting before us a bundle of abstract notions, neither fused together by creation nor made

intelligible by sympathy. And we find it impossible to believe in Gilliatt.

Somewhat more akin to humanity is Claud Frollo, the Archdeacon of Paris, in whose lugubrious story, built on the dissonance between temper and calling in a medieval ecclesiastic, such as he is represented to be, we come no doubt upon the granite rock of truth. But here, again, instinct acquires an abnormal mastery. We feel from the commencement that we are following the vagaries of a disordered brain rather than such aberrations as, continually checked or repented of, might have made a deeper tragedy. In all these strange, displeasing histories, Hugo relies on the power to which his Archdeacon gives the name of Anangke. But he nowhere explains its nature. It is blind and pitiless; not reason or justice, but rather a malevolent agency that works by planting the seed of madness into the hearts of men. In other words, it is the same blind impulse to which he attributes whatever is good in our human composition. That which unmakes Claud Frollo has made Quasimodo.

Farther to elucidate this point, let us turn to the characters in "*Les Misérables*," which have probably won more hearts among his readers than any others which Hugo has drawn. A severe criticism will not altogether spare even Monseigneur Myriel, the good Bishop, or his friend—and ours, as we admit very readily—Jean Valjean, the heroic innocent convict, whose resources, like his patience and self-abnegation, seem to have no bounds. These men are respectively types of compassion, and of a suffering which, by long continuance, has become sympathetic. But when the Bishop falls on his knees before the old regicide, the man of the Convention, *le vieux scélérat G.*, and asks his blessing, must we not turn aside and smile? We think that Monseigneur Myriel should, if we may say so, have known better; and we would fain pass on to a less disturbing instance of his evangelical meekness. Neither does he at another time escape that one touch of the theatrical which seems necessary to modern French virtue, and is fatal to English gravity. Who can believe that he rebuked Jean Valjean, the soon-to-be-converted galley-slave, for not having taken—that is

to say, stolen—in addition to various other articles, his benefactor's silver candlesticks? "So much virtue," we are tempted to exclaim, "in a naughty world, is superfluous ; it even savours of the imbecile."

Nor let it be urged that M. Myriel was but translating into current speech certain axioms of the Christian religion. On the like showing we might, or perhaps ought, to take the parables literally. It should then be the business of a true clergyman to reduce the New Testament to a code of fanaticism as devoid of light as of measure, and to forget that he is addressing reasonable creatures. But this unnatural method of isolating the virtues and the vices, and by abstraction formulating them in a single principle, "Obey impulse," which Hugo constantly employs, has the most far-reaching consequences. Consider it in regard to vindictive justice, here arraigned or condemned in the person of Valjean. Is every convict innocent? If so, *cadit quæstio*. But let us suppose him to be guilty: what then, we ask the poet, is to be done with such a man? "Forgive him, as you are a Christian," he answers with streaming eyes. As though our personal feeling, or that of all men put together, could alter the fact that this man has wilfully broken a law of the universe. Forgive him, yes: but how if the nature of things will not forgive him? That punishment is the other half of crime, as Æschylus taught long ago, is no device of priest or law-giver. If a man has sinned, it is good that he should receive the penalty of his sin. And when mercy interposes, there must be due precaution taken that justice, which is the foundation of the world, shall have its due. But throughout Hugo's dramas and stories, the principle suggested is a maudlin benevolence, utterly oblivious of the fact that wrong has been done by the wrong-doer, fixed only in its resolution to believe that pain is painful; from which it concludes that pain should be abolished in the interest of the adulterer, the thief, and the assassin.

Read, for instance, "*Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*," and observe how the crime for which the unhappy man suffers is *burked* from the beginning. We are not to know what it was. We are to turn our eyes away from it, simply to feel the horrid cold of the scissors which clip

away the hair on the wretch's neck as he is prepared for the guillotine. Why, of course, we answer, if the first half has not been crime, the second certainly is, on the part of those who carry it out. But is there, in the nature of things, no law of retribution? Or is it not true that history in every stage is the record and witness of it? To bring out that awful and verily Divine law by means of a picture of life, might well be the dramatic poet's task. But no, Hugo returns, it would offend "sentiment," which shudders at the sight of pain when inflicted by the deliberate judgment of reason, though it can glory in the murderous impulses of a Quasimodo and the suicide of a Gilliatt. To instinct everything cruel or lascivious may be pardoned; to the highest faculty of man, his well-informed conscience, nothing—when it declares that the guilty ought to suffer. For crime, as the astonishing French juror finds, there are always "extenuating circumstances." But it should seem that not even Hugo's large charity can lessen the sin of a magistrate who, in the name of supreme justice, compels the lawless man to feel that which he has made others undergo. In this fashion, free-will vanishes from the stage altogether. The criminal is a victim; his act, at the worst, insanity. What he deserves at our hands is pity and love,—hardly may we speak of forgiveness in connection with his slips from rectitude. The blame must not be laid at his door, for he did not make himself. Society made him; and, in strict accord with Rousseau's doctrine that man is born good and is good of his very essence, we are to charge his misdemeanours on his education, surroundings, temptations,—on all things but the individual himself.

Hence follows a systematic indictment of the aforesaid culpable society.

This is the excellent foppery of the world (says Edmund in "King Lear"), that when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeit of our own behaviour) we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on.

Substitute for "divine" the word "social" in this passage, and we behold immediately the *dramatis personæ* which have their exits and entrances on the scenes of modern French romance. Here is the apology for their unwholesome lives, delivered with frantic earnestness by men who are admitted to be the master-poets of their time, and by women as versatile and eloquent as George Sand, or as bitterly pessimist as Madame Akermann. A "social thrusting on" is the force, they assure us, which has shaped and is therefore to be charged with the destinies of these unregenerate "knaves, thieves, and treachers." And if we grant Rousseau's doctrine, the conclusion stands firm as adamant. Are men, taken one by one, victims? Then man taken in the mass, or society at large, is the culprit on whose back the lash ought to be laid unsparingly.

"Les Misérables" is one long indictment against the French social system on this tremendous issue. The law-made galley-slave protests by the mouth of Jean Valjean (in many respects a touching and even noble figure) that he was innocence itself till society found him guilty and branded him as an outcast for ever. Fantine, the poor lost soul, too pitiable to merit the name of courtesan—Gavroche, the child of the Paris gutter, and Eponine, his ragged sister, rise with their lamentable stories into the witness-box, there to ask, by the rhetoric of their mere presence, whether society did not make them what they are? Nay, the subterranean horde of the Claquesous and the Mont-Parnasses, and the Thénardiens *alias* Jondrettes, who practise robbery and murder for their living, do but pullulate from a decaying world the rottenness of which has entered into their bones. In all which there lies a deep undeniable core of truth. The sins of legislators have never been small; and helpless creatures like Fantine and Gavroche do and will plead against them, as with the wailing voices of flutes, in the day of Divine Judgment. But the *sæva indignatio* which burnt in the wild young heart of a Jean Jacques must not hurry us into the delusive notion that man is made by his institutions. Far deeper lies the certainty, now as ever, that those institutions are made by man; that in him is the root

of bitterness, and that something more than the police regulation of street-morality, nay, or of honest hard-working labour itself, is indispensable if we would bring a new world out of the old. We must assert again and again that the environment does not simply create the character; that man has free-will which not all the powers of evil leagued against him can utterly overwhelm; and that self-reliance, meaning in its very nature self-control, is the ultimate factor of our deliverance.

Not thus did the French Romanticists understand their mission. The "literature of despair" becoming in due course the "literature of revolt," raised a great outcry against law and authority whether in heaven or earth. Sentiment, tenderly pathetic or madly defiant, appealed from the Ten Commandments at large to "nature" and "freedom." The law of marriage, the law of property in every shape, abused or legitimate, were assailed with as slight a sense of responsibility as though they had been stage conventionalities like the supposed laws of dramatic place and time. And as the native theme of romance is love, and in France love is said to come after marriage (only it is not uncommonly directed to the wrong person), we cannot be surprised that the institution upon which are founded the family and the State was criticised with unsparing severity and reckless satire. Chamfort himself could not have flung vitriol with a deadlier aim on the contract from the benefits of which he was excluded, than did the men and women, preachers of this astounding Evangel, whose epistles to the Church of Antichrist were published in the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*," or vended at three francs fifty by Michel Lévy Frères, in the Rue Vivienne, numéro 2 bis. And always the first of the Beatitudes seemed to run, "Blessed are the unclean of heart, for they alone shall love."

This great host of Doubters, which came up with banners flying and drums beating to the siege of Mansoul, as honest John Bunyan would speak, may be divided into companies of which the more numerous were the "frivolous Doubters," and the more heroic and well-appointed the "earnest" or "melancholy Doubters." Of the frivolous, headed by the Paul de Kocks, the Eugène

Sues, and the Alexandre Dumas pères, what boots it, in this place, to say more than that romantic fiction as dealt in by them was a tissue of adventures, for the most part as little edifying to Christian eyes and ears as the *police des mœurs*—notably a lax institution at Paris even in the days of the Citizen King—would allow to be printed and set out for sale in the shop windows? They were novels of the Lower Empire, base in conception and designed chiefly to furnish ladies of fashion and their *modistes* (essentially the same species, only varied by the nature of their surroundings) with a literature in which two-thirds should be “episodes in a career of sentiment,” and the rest—to borrow Sir Walter Scott’s account of the not dissimilar kind in his early years—“secret and mysterious” associations of “Rosycrucians and Illuminati, with all their properties of black cowls, caverns, daggers, electrical machines, trap-doors, and dark lanterns.” “Le Juif Errant” and “Les Mystères de Paris” simply minister to a corrupt imagination, nor have they more importance in the history of the Novel as a product of art, than Kotzebue’s fustian tragedies have in that of the Drama. Let us call them “phosphorescent slime,” a decaying element upon which millions of seemingly human creatures lived and throve to their hearts’ content for whole generations.

But this kind of foulness had in it no death-dealing intellect; it was a stupefying opiate, not the virulent dose which makes its victim run amuck at all the world. It could not well pretend to be religion or a new superfine morality. It was “*Rabelais à la mode de Werther*,” with his sparks of heavenly fire quenched;—mere indecency and sensation made the order of the day. For the squadron of “melancholy Doubters” there was needed another kind of chief than Alexandre Dumas, the purveyor of fiction which he did not always write, but which nevertheless he contrived to sell, greatly to his own advantage, when it was stamped with his name. But truly of this whole school, in Dante’s phrase, *è bello tacere*.

We hasten to speak of that chief, or chieftainess, whom in the hour of their forward march the melancholy Doubters sent before them, perched on a cannon, like

Mademoiselle Théroigne to the assault of Versailles. George Sand divides with Madame de Stäel the honours of French female literature; and if, in point of moral reputation, one is a little embarrassed to choose between them, as regards genius it may be affirmed that the Sibyl of Nohant was a far more consummate artist than her Swiss predecessor and rival. But we shall not attempt a parallel between George Sand and Corinne. More interesting it would be, did our space not forbid, to compare or contrast the author of "Lélia" with our own "melancholy Doubter," the tender-hearted, large-brained George Eliot, who perhaps approached as nearly to the Rousseau type of feminine genius as English custom has hitherto permitted.

The points of difference, however, are striking and characteristic. Marian Evans, whose decorous immorality excluded her from the company of most virtuous women, would have shrunk, we doubt not, with a surely not unjustifiable touch of Puritanism, from the sight of Madame Dudevant in boy's clothes, among the rabble rout of Parisian *ateliers* and other centres of "life and culture" in the gay country of Bohemia. When Miss Evans broke the commandments, she did so with a grave face, and almost under a sense of duty. But George Sand had not a particle of Methodism in her composition. From her mother, the child of the Paris pavement, and her not very remote ancestor, Augustus the Strong, King of Poland, she had inherited a vagabond and sensuous nature. The master of her mind, as we do not require to be told, was Jean Jacques; with him for her spiritual director she went through the experiences of a neglected married woman, or *femme incomprise*, until at last she "took the key of the fields," as the French have it, and abandoned her husband to his mistress and his orgies. The superior persons, who zealously propagate the formula of "Art for Art's sake," tell us that the moral qualities of the artist do not affect his productions whether of hand or brain. Surely there never was a more convincing proof of the contrary than the way in which French Romance reflects in itself, and exalts to a species of factitious religion, doctrines manifestly drawn from the

lives of its authors. Thackeray, who would now be termed a "Philistine of genius,"—which perhaps he was,—has made merry in his "Paris Sketch Book" over the apostles of this latest dispensation, who, having broken the sacred ties of home to follow after their own lusts, proceed thereupon to invent a Gospel which shall not merely pardon but deify these "little enormities." He would like to call witnesses to character before accepting their evidence. And why not? Certain it is that the question of French civilisation as a whole, and not simply of the art which is here seen to be its outcome, rises before our minds when we open "Indiana," "Valentine," "Lélia," or any other of the early romances with which George Sand made even the well-trained ears of Parisian society to tingle.

For there is a morality of art, subject to its proper laws, which, while in no sense they run counter to the morality of private life, do yet follow a path of their own, as all will comprehend to whom the phrase "poetical justice" is not devoid of meaning. But since the laws of morality belong to the same stock and spring out of one root, a thoroughly corrupt soul can no more observe the ethics of literature than it can the ethics of daily conduct. Even Goethe, supreme artist though he was, displays that weakness of intuition repeatedly in "Wilhelm Meister" as in the "Venetian Epigrams," and after a still more lamentable fashion in his dull and stifling romance of the "Elective Affinities." He would have exercised, we do not hesitate to say, an incomparably deeper influence on mankind if, like Milton and Schiller, he had kept himself free from moral blemish. As much, in its degree, may be said of Victor Hugo, whose biography recalls more than one episode on which no admirer of his would care to dwell. The man's scandalous servility under every *régime*, except that of Napoleon III. who drove him out of France, was only surpassed by the self-adulation which, if in others of his countrymen it appears like a disease, in him assumed the proportions and for years led him to indulge in the language of mania. And both the time-serving and the vanity have left their trace in his writings.

Hugo and Goethe, however, had nothing in common. But a likeness has been suggested, not absurdly, between Goethe and George Sand. In both we find a high artistic perfection, a versatility and abundance, and a marvellously soft yet clear colouring, which combines something of Raffaele with the Caracci gracefulness. Again, they were both distinguished for a singular *bonhomie*, free from pretence or affectation; while, when we compare their first works with their later, we cannot but see in them a certain purifying of the flame from the smoke. But, above all, they resembled one another in their complete detachment from persons once passionately loved.

Always their chief aim appears to have been the development of their own character, at whatever cost. Goethe tells his sentimental experiences with unruffled composure. "Werther" may be a lyrical outburst, and the story of Frederike of Sesenheim a very charming pastoral, but never once does the narrator let slip his self-control. He stands outside his own creations, though they have sprung from his heart. With no less suppression of the personal element does George Sand describe her relations with Alfred de Musset in "Elle et Lui." It is an admirable canvas, full of fire and passion, artistically considered; but she has ground her poet into paint, and lays on the colour without giving a second thought to the life-blood which has yielded its crimson. Again she takes up her parable and writes of herself and Chopin in "Lucrezia Floriani"—the manuscript of which, she naïvely assures us, was read chapter by chapter to the gentleman who undoubtedly furnished the original of Prince Karol. To what a length Madame Sand's audacity of self-portraiture could reach, those will know whom duty or inclination has led to the study of that remarkable, if not very exhilarating, story. Like "Valentine," it belongs to a world—we cannot say an unfallen one—in which shame is not. And yet the book is no production of a cynic, if we are to understand by cynicism what it was at the beginning, virtue turned inside out. For the virtue which in Christian countries is accounted the glory of womanhood, appears to have

had no more place in George Sand's catalogue of moral observances than in that of Madame de Warens. Her Lucrezia Floriani, whose four children have had three different fathers,—but that is a detail,—pleads with actually a not ignoble eloquence for the rôle she has taken up on the stage of life. It is not precisely that of a courtesan purchasable with money,—she is careful to reassure us on that head,—but of an *hetæra* who gives herself according to the impulse of the moment. Thérèse, in “Elle et Lui,” has not fallen quite so deep into the ditch. But her purity is just as much a counterfeit as Lucrezia's of the real unknown thing which George Sand perhaps believed that she was exalting. It is pure ignorance, and that is all.

The fixed starting-point in this very strange and comical realm is the violability of the marriage-contract. It becomes what Sophie Arnould called it, “The sacrament of adultery.” From “Indiana,” with its lovely rhythmical prose and its reminiscences of “Paul et Virginie,” to “La Marquise” and “Constance Verrier,” we listen to the same unvarying tale. Everywhere the “sensibilities of the heart” rule as a first principle; duty does not count; or it becomes, as in “Jacques,” the French duty of the husband committing suicide that his wife and her lover may be happy. Nor are we to suppose these things burlesque. They have been written in sober sadness, and for our learning. Their drift is not irony; they are simply due to the false ideal which the keenest-witted nation in Europe has set up and diligently worshipped, as Titania doted on the ass's head of bully Bottom. “Show us the path of Bernica, or the lake of Sténio, or the glaciers of Jacques,” is the exclamation which George Sand puts into the mouth of her own children when they enquire of her for wisdom. In other words, “Teach us an heroic, high-sentimental doctrine of suicide, as the only stoicism which we are capable of enduring or understanding.” Love is always to be in excess, always a blind motion, always criminal, always disastrous. There is but one virtue—self-sacrifice. “A noble Christian sentiment,” we are on the point of answering, when we are confounded by the explanation that it is self-sacrifice coming as the

last act of despair. Thérèse—which is, being interpreted, George Sand—offers this consolation to her lover. They cannot live in one another's company, for sentiment is after all mere egoism, and nothing is so dreary as the conflict of selfishness between two of the species. "Therefore," counsels Thérèse, "let us die together." The last sacrament of this religion is a pan of charcoal. Indiana, too, travels with her *cavalier servente* to the Isle of France, that they may perish more romantically, though at greater cost—to say nothing of sea-sickness—than if they had stayed at home. The atmosphere of "Lélia" is impregnated with suicide like a miasma. But George Sand, like Goethe, outlived that doctrine. Jacques might fling himself over the glacier; his creator never did. When she had examined life from this point of view, she calmly moved on to a second; and, as we all know, she survived to a good old age. It is significant, however, that Rousseau, as we have observed, did perhaps make away with himself. Nor can we doubt that the philosophy which issues in so horrible a conclusion has sunk deep into the minds of cultivated Parisians. On this subject statistics and current literature do not leave us uncertain.

These are some of the leading principles which shape and control the "literature of despair"; nor is it difficult to perceive how an "age of decadence" should have been its sequel. But the word "Romanticism" leads to further considerations on the method which our melancholy teachers have pursued, in commending their poisoned chalice as a substitute for the old religion to mankind. It was an axiom with them—and we may regret that others, better qualified to be the guides of Christendom, have been slow in learning it—that to persuade the mind we must charm the imagination. Now Romanticism, we may say—to make what profit we can of terms which the greatest of our critics, Coleridge, has vainly endeavoured to naturalise among us—has affinities with the "Reason" of the Kantian schools. It is the method of the imagination enlightened by ideals. Or again, to throw out expressions which, in default of better, may perhaps be intelligible to the initiated, let us affirm

that it transcends the finite categories of the "Understanding"; that it eschews the conventional whether of art or society; and that it holds by the instinctive and unconscious. By all means, if one quite took in this lofty language! However, even the untravelled John Bull can seize the distinction, though he probably has never tried his hand at defining it, between Scott's "Bride of Lammermoor," for instance, and Fielding's "Tom Jones." Clearly it is a distinction which goes beyond costume and manner of speech; nay, beyond choice of incident. "Tom Jones" has been thought the supreme production in its own kind; but is its kind supreme? Have we not come to recognise that the Shakespearean interpretation of reality lies closer to facts, revealing immensities in the little and eternities in the things of every day which no Fielding, perfect as he may be in surface-painting, has so much as dreamt of? Now here is the substance, and the justification, of genuine Romanticism.

Shakespeare's treatment is in this true sense always romantic. His characters live and move in Nature, which spreads around and away from them in boundless prospects. The little human society, shut up within its four walls, mainly occupied in feeding its hungry senses coarsely or daintily—which is the "world" of our century as of the preceding—he takes in his giant grasp and flings out upon the night and the stars. How much grander, even, we may fancy his dealing with it would have been, though essentially unchanged, had he known that the sun itself is but a planet, travelling with its system through space towards who can tell what constellation? It is the knitting of Nature with man, the descent of man into his own spirit—this opening of two worlds, the inner and the outer, equally vast, strange, and terrible, into one another which Romanticism at its best signifies. To tear aside the veil of conventionalism, painted over with commonplace superstitions, with religions in which no one has more than a lip-belief, with institutions out of which the life is gone, with customs justified by no rational significance—to sweep away all this, and lay bare the sanctuary and the Divine presence—was the aim, had they but rightly apprehended it, of the bold

insurgents who appealed from high-heeled shoes and the *récit de Thérémène* to the tragi-comedy of existence.

But we need hardly observe that, in so doing, these adventurous paladins, headed by Théophile Gautier in his too famous waistcoat, were only translating into French a doctrine which had been presented with philosophical breadth by Herder, and Goethe, and Schiller, as with infinite quaintness yet rich and persuasive eloquence by Jean Paul. The fatality which seems to dog all French translation could not be lacking at this conjuncture. Heine has related, in his mocking vein, the answer which was given him by various Parisian newspapers when he offered them an original view. "Cela n'entre pas dans l'idée de notre journal," they politely informed him. It was, and still is, an impossible undertaking to put German thoughts into a Gallic brain; all known methods of reducing the cubic expansion of the former for that purpose end in leaving the most valuable parts behind. The reasoned imagination of a Shakespeare, and, in its measure, of a Goethe, became, as we have seen, in Victor Hugo mere sensuous fancy. It was as though the human spirit had incarnated itself in some lower creation; all its faculties sank down to the level of the thing into which it had entered. But fancy is the ape of imagination, not its fellow. On this scale, however, the whole of modern French literature has been constructed. The intellect, confined within the limits of mere "understanding," must needs debase the ideal of duty to an imperious Fate without compassion or regard for man; it cannot but change love into voluptuousness, the beautiful into the pleasant, aspiration into animal desire, and religion with its solemn outlooks into fantasy.

This utter transformation was aided in no slight degree by a peculiarity of the French language, remarked on somewhere in George Sand's "Impressions et Souvenirs," and distinctly perceptible to one who compares it with English. We mean that, while the grammar is precise and definite, the vocabulary is by no means so. French words, as a rule, are much more abstract than either English or German. They have less colour and circumstantial force, are not nearly so

picturesque, and leave on the mind a sketchy, unfinished impression. It is a great mistake to suppose that the senses give all men the like information. "The eye sees that which it brings with it to see." The quality of mind it is which informs the senses, directing them to what they would otherwise have overlooked; and here perhaps we should seek for the primary distinction between the epochs of literature. Men have always the same number of senses. Then why did not the eighteenth century read in Nature what is plain and palpable to us of the twentieth? In like manner we may ask, why are the French, as a people, content to know so much less of the world out-of-doors than Englishmen know? Why have we twenty words for the different kinds of trees in a copse and they but two or three? So it is, however; and while our most pregnant speech combines the terms of high imagination with the commonest weeds of the field, with the vessels and furniture of the homestead, as exemplified in George Eliot, Carlyle, and Dickens—to take examples from the last generation—in France the language of society has usurped enormous dominion, the country dialects have been regarded as mere *patois*; and rhetoric, not poetry, has come to be looked upon as the chief gift of a classic author. But rhetoric is always, in a large measure, conventional.

Romanticism did, indeed, make desperate efforts to get things called by their everyday names: a spade was henceforth to be a spade, not "an implement of agriculture"; even Peter Bell, with his yellow primrose, would have been welcomed as an ally against the elegant parsimony of Racine, who had but some fifteen (or is it sixteen?) hundred and twenty words in his satchel. The French of Hugo, Sand, or Gautier, is a richly coloured, harmonious, and varied dialect, compared with the rippling current, at once so clear and so shallow, of Voltaire. In Balzac we find a Corinthian brass, fused of all elements from the technique of science to the slang of the gutter. But neither Realist nor Romanticist can give to the language what perhaps it never had—a sense of the infinite in the real, or, to speak less obscurely, that poetic insight to which common things are like so many mirrors of a

spiritual world, reflecting it in symbol and shadow. On this side, where English excels by nature, it has been our great good fortune to have always recognised as at once the standard of literature and of religious belief, that Hebrew Bible which makes of things seen, whether high or low, vehicles and media of the eternal. Whatever dull rhetoric may have sounded in the ears of the nation since the days of Tillotson, there was never wanting a witness to rebuke it by showing how much grander was the speech handed down from Tyndale no less than from Shakespeare, from Milton the Puritan as from Milton the poet.

In France, however, when the classics of Louis XIV. ceased to be in honour, there was no higher literature to which men could turn. Their standard was still the judgment of "The Forty"; they could not touch the commonplace without soiling their hands. Vague rhetoric,—invocations of Nature, Doubt, Freedom, Love (all these to be spelt with capital letters or they become of none effect), was called upon to supply the place left vacant by the Christian religion, itself not so much rejected as forgotten during the Terror and the wars of Napoleon. Even to-day there is no little conjuring with these Pharaoh's serpents in the high places of French legislation. But it may be questioned whether any one believes in them. A culture of fine feelings at any time is little short of an organised hypocrisy. We may rely upon it that M. Yves Guyot smiles at his brother augurs when he handles in the tribune these poor fangless reptiles. Of such declamatory sound and fury, signifying nothing, these "melancholy Doubters" possessed an inexhaustible store. "Les Misérables" measures it out, as "Clarissa Harlowe" does tender sentiment, by the yard—by the furlong. Much of George Sand's earlier writing, especially "Lélia," "Spiridion," and the series of religious rhapsodies to which they belong, almost overpowers one with voluble discourse concerning Love, Doubt, Freedom, and Fraternity. This is the very false gallop of the sublime, and will remind the irreverent, to whom Pierre Leroux—her sometime master—is no more an apostle than any other Pierre, not so much of Pegasus in harness as of a well-trained circus pony, going round the ring or

vaulting through hoops at the crack of his master's whip. The ultra-masonic initiation which takes up so many weary chapters of "*La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*" exhibits these rushlight illuminations and this sham theatrical thunder—the rolling of sheet-iron distinctly perceptible throughout—to perfection. All is calculated for an audience in pit and boxes, to be startled or seduced into applause.

But in George Sand's volatile yet passionate nature there was always one sound element, with which Romanticism might and did achieve great things. She has propounded a sensual scepticism in the mantle of "*Lélia*"; reproduced in "*Consuelo*," "*Leone Leoni*," "*La Dernière Aldini*," and many other volumes, her vivid Titianesque impressions of Venice and its daily life; pictured castles in Bohemia (not the Paris one) tenanted by mad descendants of the mad Taborites; sketched Sicilian bandits in "*Il Piccinino*," and Byronic pirates in "*L'Uscoque*." Her fidelity to nature in the description of the *Campagna Romana* and the Alban Hills is astonishing, though the story in which it occurs, "*La Daniella*," has no great charm. She has even transported us to Scandinavia in her entertaining romance "*L'Homme de Neige*," a remarkable voyage for such a stay-at-home temperament as the French, and more successful, to our mind, than Balzac's "*Séraphita*." The Alpine scenery, again, of "*Valvèdre*" and "*Un Dernier Amour*" carries with it a keen air, and is bright with the mountain freshness. But unquestionably her noblest work was done in painting the quiet landscape, so full of delicious touches, of her native Berri. When we think of George Sand, it is *La Vallée Noire*, rather than palaces on the Grand Canal, with which we associate her memory. The warm tropical scenery of "*Indiana*," but still more the lovely descriptions which were wrought into the otherwise shameful tragedies of "*Valentine*" and "*Jacques*," announced that, when the fires of her passion should be a little spent, the author would turn for consolation, perhaps even for cleansing from the stains of youth, to nature and the simple, true-hearted peasantry among whom she had been brought up.

At length the time came. "André," her first essay in this kind—an exceedingly picturesque and brilliant piece of prose, woven in a Venetian lodging—was succeeded by "La Mare au Diable," which some have thought the most perfect idyl she has written. "François le Champi" was coming out, when the Revolution of February 1848 put an abrupt stop to all except political enterprises, in her conduct of which Madame Sand showed more energy and decision than her male colleagues, but could achieve nothing durable. Then the social reformers were swept away in a storm of fiery hail during the "days of June," and all likelihood vanished of founding a Utopia in the gardens of the Tuileries. George Sand retreated to her diminutive château of Nohant, there to reproduce in her delightful style the quaintly humorous stories, rustic legends, and exquisite *naïveté* of manners which she had come to understand as she sat listening from early days to the women beating hemp round the hearth on winter evenings, or rode about with gamekeepers and shepherd folk, not disdaining the friendship, either, of any good honest fellow who might be *un peu braconnier* when he happened to have a gun in his hand while a hare was running by.

In these unpretending tales, "La Petite Fadette," "Jeanne," "Les Maîtres Sonneurs"—it needs not to set down the names of books with which the reading world is so familiar—that task which Romanticism aimed at fulfilling, is certainly accomplished, with infinite pathos and charm. Who has not enjoyed and been taken with the simple affection, the clear good sense, which has just a point of *malice* in it to keep all sound and wholesome, of "La Petite Fadette"? Or who does not feel glad, as if the world had discovered more goodness at the heart of it than one quite believed in, when Madeleine Blanchet consents, to her own great surprise, to marry the straight-limbed, curly-headed *Champi*, for whom she has suffered many a sour rebuke, and does it in the most innocent, loving way imaginable? Another pair whom Millet would paint for us with the unconscious beauty of expression they have in the book are Germain and la petite Marie, whose love story is the subject of "La Mare au Diable."

Like unto them is the brave and gentle Huriel, player on the *cornemuse*, woodman, and friend of all the countryside, in "Les Maîtres Sonneurs." This last is a volume of purely rustic French, most racy and delightful, suggesting to us how much has been lost to the Classic or Parisian literature by its determined suppression of local colour, provincialisms, and the thousand-and-one not ungraceful peculiarities of diction as of breeding which lingered half a century ago, and are not yet wholly extinct, in the depths of France. The village life has still those idyllic aspects, those mornings in the great woods where the winds are fresh and cold, those Sunday afternoons with their music and dancing on the green, those rural fêtes at which Goldsmith might have blown melody into his wandering flute. But few have known the ways of the French peasant as George Sand knew them. To have gone down, so to speak, into the heart of his existence, to have eaten of his bread and drunk of his cup of sour *piquette*, when it was not unmixed water, was a condition of her astonishing exactitude in drawing him as he lives and moves. But she needed, likewise, to stand away from it, to view it as a whole, before she could render its meaning transparent. Experience was plainly not enough, for who among the millions of rustic France could have given a true account, as she has done, of their curious customs—their neighbourly kindnesses and jealousies, loves and quarrels—their dumb feeling with the beasts of the field and the stones of the brook—their superstitions, fears, traditional religion—their cloudy horizon of knowledge on which things foreign and distant gleam as faintly as stars in a fog? The genius which could render these things faithfully was unique; it has had no successor.

Even to her it is a sombre world in which Jacques Bonhomme passes his days. How fair Nature had made it she is never tired of telling us, in her "Promenades autour d'un Village," in "André"—a story of streams and meadows, where the dull country town is like a blot on the beautiful writing,—in that lively and original *scenario* "Le Diable aux Champs." But, "Nature is vanishing," she exclaims towards the close of her long life, as she looks out over that agricultural France of which

we are sometimes told that its prosperity is the soundest thing left in Europe :

Under the hand of the peasant (she continues) the large timber is disappearing, the *landes* are losing their freshness, and we must travel far from the towns to enjoy silence, to breathe the fragrance of the wild plants, or to catch the secret of the murmuring brook rippling at its ease. All is now clearance, levelling, straightening, enclosures, regularity, fences; and (she concludes) the rich man alone still has the right to keep a little corner of nature for his personal enjoyment. Whenever an agrarian law comes into force, there will not be a tree left standing in France.¹

The peasant proprietor cannot afford to cultivate the art of landscape. But more. If it has been held as the essential distinction between civilised man and the savage, that the latter cuts down the tree in order to enjoy its fruits, then evidently the race which has now settled upon the land of France is savage in the whole extent of the word; for it sacrifices the future to the present, and is exhausting the fertility of the soil as well as making an end of pastoral beauty. "The Forest of Ardennes," cries George Sand again, "where is it now? There is no room for it in the struggle of markets and the fierce onslaught of these barbarians, to whom its immemorial trees are worth only what they will fetch as dead timber. Rosalind and Orlando, and the melancholy Jacques, must trudge along the high road seeking vainly for a relic of the primeval forest in countries which are all enclosed, where to trespass in search of the picturesque has become an offence at law, like stealing pheasants and snaring leverets." How changed, indeed, would be the atmosphere of her most touching stories, if the woods and waters ceased to fill them with a murmur of life! But the streams will soon be drains to feed canals; the woods have been already felled over immense tracts where dull beet-root, and sarrasin to make black bread, and root-crops for Pharaoh's lean kine, offer a dismal prospect to the traveller, as though the universe had become one base kitchen-garden. Such is the reign of equality and utility which has succeeded, not to better governments, but to what was surely a less inhuman ideal.

¹ "Impressions et Souvenirs," p. 326.

And it is a world of suffering, too. George Sand has not painted—her temperament would not allow her to dwell upon—the appalling sordidness, the perfectly bestial avarice, which fill the pages of “Eugénie Grandet” and others of Balzac’s studies in money-getting. She took no pleasure in dissecting a miser’s soul. But how, for example, the women who are minded to be generous do suffer in her rustic stories! Poor Madeleine Blanchet cannot give away a morsel to the wretched Zabelle and her *Champi*, but the old mother-in-law remarks it and grumbles that “there is too much bread eaten at the mill.” Too much bread eaten! No country yokel, earning his ten shillings a week in Dorsetshire, has yet arrived at the state of mind which these words express. He does not measure his drink—more is the pity. But neither has he come to weigh his bread by ounces. He starves occasionally; and perhaps starvation has its advantages, when compared with a wolfish scare lest bread should be wanting to us because we have bestowed a crust on a beggar. But wherever “the rage of individual possession” has been suffered to have its way, as in modern France, there comes an end to the freedom of heart which, in spite of poverty and in the face of privations, refuses cheerily to look upon lands and money as the *summum bonum*. Not by bread alone does man live. Yet in France to-day the whole tendency is for the *paysan* to believe that, if he lifts his eyes from the furrow in which he is walking, it will be reckoned against him, and he will find the earth a stepmother. And he fells the forests, pollutes the rivers, burns up the wild vegetation which clad the wilderness with beauty, and would coin the sunset into dollars if his brutal alchemy could draw it down to him.

Of these things George Sand was well aware. They made her heart bleed. But with the passion for equality which is so little known among Englishmen that they can hardly enter into its meaning when they hear of it as a factor in the revolutions of France, she wrote and spoke—of course vehemently—in favour of a vague Socialism where every peasant should have his rood of land, yet be free from the grinding tyranny of the money-lender. A consummation not yet reached, nor likely to be, while

the peasant himself is devoured with "earth-hunger," and has lost even the dim notion his forefathers had that society is an organism and not a scramble or a Donnybrook Fair, of which the guiding maxim, if you have a stick in your hand, is, "wherever you see a head, hit it." The small proprietors beat one another down with their sticks, and the usurer hunts them with a *chassepôt*. Women slave in the fields, and even Germain, the well-to-do *laboureur* in "La Mare au Diable," who has lost his young wife, is reminded that, if he waits till he is thirty, he will be too old to marry again. The dream of "a kindly, free, poetic, laborious, and simple existence for the tiller of the soil," not only has not hitherto been realised, but every day recedes into the farther distance, while an aristocracy founded on money-bags and a government of "second-rate horse-doctors," if we may believe the late M. Gambetta's account of his honourable associates in the Chamber of Deputies, combine to rob their thirty-seven millions of "equal subjects" at once of all standing-ground in this world and of the hope of any in the next.

It is worth observing that the author of the *Fadettes* and the *Germaines*, though she wrote much of foreign scenes and strange peoples, has not shown the least enthusiasm for Paris. She prefers her innocent *bergeries*. Acquainted though she was, by hard experience, with those *mansardes* from which genius has so often looked down on the panorama of the Seine, less satisfied than Madame de Staël (who had her own carriage) with the gutter of the Rue du Bac, she has declined, nevertheless, a contest with Balzac, who is the Dante of this grim Inferno. Even when her stories lead her to Paris, she has either left the background in shadow or lighted it, prettily enough, with the lamps of the Champs Elysées. Her books contain no vision of the great city. "L'Histoire de ma Vie," which may be conveniently treated as a romance, does indeed show us the inside of the Convent of the Dames Anglaises where she passed some years, and was converted, in a mystical, unsatisfactory way, to the Christian religion. It is admirable writing, clear, fresh, entertaining, and in perfect measure. But Paris lies a

thousand miles away from it. So afterwards, when she told, so far as they could be related without scandal, the literary and other adventures in which she was engaged, there were but too many occasions when she might have filled her canvas with original figures, more truthful than Balzac's impossible orgies in "*La Peau de Chagrin*," but quite as Dantean. However, she prefers to discuss Fourier and Michel of Bourges, to portray her delightful old Voltairean grandmother, to tell us with astounding frankness the story of her mother's loves and quarrels, and to write the chapters in which her own mental development is recorded, showing how narrowly she escaped becoming a Madame Bovary in person. Her peculiar temperament, meditative and enthusiastic, made her less at home in general society than any French writer except Rousseau. She found no inspiration in the streets which Balzac's hard yet magical pen, and poor starved Méryon's graving tool, have reproduced in all their unwholesome reality, their glaring lights and high-kindled, sulphureous shadows, peopled with the multitude of debauched men and women who to-day must pawn their rags for bread, and to-morrow will not find costumes dainty enough or jewels brilliant enough wherewith to deck themselves in the magasins of the Louvre and the Rue de Rivoli. There was something of the Italian rather than the Frenchwoman in her disposition. She resembled Corinne, not Madame Marneffe. Or, perhaps we should say that her essentially idyllic nature had little in common with the corrupt artificial type to which all things beyond the Bois de Boulogne seem foreign and uninteresting.

We have now, therefore, reached the city on the Seine from which with Victor Hugo we set out; and Balzac and his descendants, legitimate or illegitimate, must carry on the story of French novel-writing. Let us cast a glance over the way we have travelled. Fiction, we hold, in the stage to which it has advanced among our Gallic neighbours, has become a department of the national autobiography. We may liken it to the battle-pieces which cover so many acres of canvas at Versailles. But it is a picture more than equal in extent, and far superior in merit, to that flaming, smoke-begirt exhibition

of all the glories of France. The grouping, if largely fantastic, is in many instances faithful; the colouring, though smutched and daubed, reveals—it may be in a single corner like Balzac's "Chef d'œuvre inconnu"—the hand of the master. Much is caricature, idle dreaming, impossible conjunctures. And a more philosophical century will be entitled to write in the margin "Ægri somnia,"—"such things did a fever-stricken, God-forsaken time murmur in its sleep." But amid these dreams may be discovered on a careful inspection reminiscences of truth and reality. They reveal the political convictions, the moral axioms, nay some of the elements of religion,—or what shall we call it?—which have gone far to make the France of our time a hissing and an astonishment to the rest of civilised mankind.

This great movement, however, which began with Romanticism, is ending in Realism. From Rousseau through Chateaubriand, Hugo, and George Sand, it has descended, by the way of Balzac and Flaubert, to the Zolas who degrade literature to the "photography of the moment." In the long space from 1815 to 1890 the question so fiercely debated between Classicists and Romanticists has taken new ground: as the defenders of Corneille and Racine were compelled to meet the attacks of Hugo and his motley following in the "Battle of Hernani," so now the latter have been assailed in turn, and have fallen back into a position not unlike that which they denounced in 1822 as *perruquinisme*, or the school of tie-wigs and hair-powder. For they had revolted in the name of life and a close study of nature from the self-styled classic drama (which typified the entire literature) of the age of Louis Quatorze. In nothing did they glory so much as in breaking down the barriers set up by the Academy and the "Art Poétique" of Boileau between the speech of the people and that in which the Méropes and the Phèdres declaimed their ancient woes. The periwig, says Hugo in some famous verses of "Les Contemplations," became a lion's mane; words which had been condemned to the galleys suddenly sprang before the footlights and began to contend for tragic palms with the aristocracy of language—now, like all

things else, condemned to pay homage to the standard of '93. Literature was to be made democratic, that it might share in the universal freedom. There was to be a general gaol delivery of vocables hitherto not suffered by ears polite. All that, as we have seen, came to pass. But the whirligig of time brings its revenges; and if the changes of fashion are known in another world, Corneille and Racine may at this moment be enjoying the defeat which not Hugo alone, but the whole movement of which he was the head and front, is undergoing at the hands of a truculent host of "physiological novelists," "scientific Realists," and other as strange apparitions, who, raising aloft that identical banner of nature and freedom, have inaugurated the decadence or the demoralisation of French art generally and of romance in particular. Action and reaction have proved equal and opposite. Yet we assert, and we believe there is little difficulty in showing, that in every phase of its development the influence of Rousseau on French current literature has been paramount.

For Rousseau appeals throughout his writings to passion kindled, not by the ideals of reason, but by sensuous instincts bent on their own gratification. He substitutes for reason sentiment, as instead of duty he preaches the pursuit of mere happiness. His favourite, nay, his supreme "state of consciousness" is a kind of voluptuous day-dreaming, into which the severe powers of the spirit do not enter. Passion, reverie, introspection, with a huge development of the Ego,—these are the elements or instruments wherewith he builds up his scheme of the *Vita Beata*. Not strenuous exertion, not the subduing of instinct to law, but free surrender to every passing fancy, is that which makes the staple of his life and doctrine. Nor could it be otherwise if sentiment is to be the governing principle in human nature; for of this it may be said, with absolute truth, that no man has touched its wave twice. It is a perpetual flux determined by ten thousand accidents, and no two alike; a succession of moments where one feeling is chased by another like clouds by a changing wind. Accordingly, when we turn to the writers of French Romance, we

find them without exception occupied in delineating passion and its consequences, but never arriving at a law of life, not even, in spite of Hugo and his sublime caricature, at that conception of fatality or Nemesis from which the Greek poets drew such high religious lessons. Whether it be the "literature of despair," which filled the first half of the nineteenth century, or the "literature of decadence," which may long outlast the second, we nowhere see in it a revelation of the purposes apart from which life can have no meaning. And of this utter failure to contribute to the world's enduring classics there is but one explanation: that instead of searching into the facts of life with the aid of moral principles,—to say nothing of the Christian beliefs,—these men and women have lost themselves amid the delusions of sentiment, imagining that by freedom must be understood a deliverance from the yoke of the law, and a filling oneself with the fruits of one's own devices.

That such has been the general tendency of Romanticism, not the Shakspearian, in touch with infinitude, but that which derives its scope and inspiration from "*La Nouvelle Héloïse*," we think no one will call in question who has read its productions for any more serious purpose than that of occupying an idle hour. But if so, it is a truth eminently worth stating; for on novels and newspapers the multitude even of cultivated people depend, rather than on the formal teaching of divines or philosophers, for their views of life. Hugo, George Sand, Balzac, have spoken to millions in the two hemispheres; at the end of half a century their influence does not seem to be on the wane. Are they classics, or only pseudo-classics? Nay, are they not classics at all, but only what Carlyle would have called "the Devil's horn-books"? It is an inquiry pregnant with results for the future. We have spoken our convictions as regards the first and more genial phase of the movement, in which foreign ideals, the contemporary influence of Goethe and Sir Walter Scott, and the idolatry, somewhat founded on misapprehension, of Shakespeare, exerted a dominant sway. It remains to consider the second, when Shakespeare has been forgotten, Goethe flung on one side, and when

French fiction is mainly concerned with self-portraiture in the photographer's studio, under the limits assigned by Realism. Our verdict has been already foreshadowed ; but the subject is a large one, and deserves a chapter to itself, which shall now be given.

VII

FRENCH REALISM AND DECADENCE¹

WHO was the father of French Realism? Are we to go back as far as Diderot, the painter of a world of rascaldom, herald of the great secret, as he deemed it, that good and evil are, like words in the philosophy of Bacon, the "counters of wise men, but the money of fools"? Or shall we be content with Balzac as the head and front of the movement,—Balzac, in whose romances it is neither easy nor of much consequence to strike upon the trace of Diderot? What part, again, had Flaubert, that astonishing victim of his own style, in creating a manner which he detested? And where does Gautier, true artist of the Decadence, come in upon the line of march? These, like the enigmas with which Tiberius plied his *mathematici*, are puzzling questions. They have been as hotly debated as the existence of Homer's Troy, the authorship of "Junius," or the drift of Mr. Gladstone's most eloquent speeches. And critics who are competent to pronounce on the subject, differ greatly in their conclusions. To some it appears as false as it certainly is degrading to couple Balzac with the author of "La Bête Humaine" and "La Terre." On the other hand, M. Zola, though content as Napoleon was to be his own ancestor, holds that from Balzac and Diderot he is assuredly descended. And for the spirit, if not the letter of this conclusion, he may appeal to the high

¹ H. de Balzac, "La Comédie Humaine": Paris, 1883. Stendhal, "Œuvres Complètes": Paris, 1889. G. Flaubert, "Œuvres Complètes": Paris, 1885. G. Flaubert, "Lettres à George Sand": Paris, 1884. E. Zola, "Œuvres Complètes": Paris, 1888. A. Daudet, "Œuvres": Paris, 1888. P. Bourget, "Œuvres": Paris, 1889. P. Loti, "Pêcheurs d'Islande," etc.: Paris, 1888. H. Taine, "Nouveaux Essais de Critique et d'Histoire": Paris, 1860. F. Brunetière, "Le Roman Naturaliste": Paris, 1884. E. Tissot, "Les Evolutions de la Critique Française": Paris, 1890.

authority of M. Taine, whose study of the "Saint Simon of the populace," though now more than forty years old, is still the most pregnant word that has been uttered about him.¹

But perhaps the manner in which the filiation must be established has more interest for the student of French life and character than the verdict of the Court as to the fact itself. For, granting that Balzac has had the widest influence on later schools, he did not so much invent as apply a method which was destined to prevail in literature when it had become dominant in science—the method, we mean, of dissection and of vivisection. M. Zola has every claim to be heard when he describes his own volumes as "physiological romance." That repulsive term—fit title of a Chamber of Horrors with doorways leading into the shambles, the surgeon's hall of "demonstration," the house of shame, the prison, the pawnshop, and the reeking tavern—will, it must be allowed, not seem wholly out of place as we turn over the pages of the "Comédie Humaine" and scan its two thousand figures. Whatever else may be found in Balzac, this element and atmosphere are not wanting. M. Zola has perhaps taken from the immense quarry only what suited his purpose; and that purpose may make all the difference. But to think of Balzac is to be reminded of physiology as of much else that is akin to it. Nor can we make an easier descent into our subject than on this side.

First, however, let us distinctly state what that subject is. We have not proposed, either in this or in the preceding essay, to guide our readers through the miles on miles of picture gallery which are filled with the masterpieces, the failures, and the mediocrities of French fiction, as though every well-known author deserved at least a moment's attention from us. That would be impossible in any case; and it is not unlikely that the victim, as in Macaulay's legend, would prefer the galleys to Guicciardini, or a dissertation on Egyptian chronology to so bewildering

¹ Taine, "Nouveaux Essais—Balzac," pp. 63-170. See also Zola, "Le Roman Expérimental," *passim*. In English, Mr. W. S. Lilly's admirable paper, which ought to be reprinted as a volume by itself, will throw light on this question.

a survey. But wherever laws or tendencies assert themselves, it is enlightening to follow them. The "great divide" in modern French literature is between Romanticism and Realism. When, however, we compare that literature with English, German, or Greek, it seems to us clear that one single name may be applied not inaptly to the whole of it. Call it the Romantic tendency in Victor Hugo and his imitators, the Naturalistic in Balzac and Flaubert and Zola, the Pessimist in Daudet, Bourget, Pierre Loti, and others of the latest time, it is, after all, an identical instinct which these men obey. They reject the spiritual philosophy, whether of the "House of Socrates" or of the Christian teaching, and they follow materialist and physiological methods. Not, as will be apparent from the names we have thrown together, that sub-varieties including large mental distinctions can be overlooked; we should be the last to imagine it. But there is far more to unite them in a common definition than to put them asunder. And when we have ascertained what that is, we shall have done something towards fixing their place in European literature. How do the French story-tellers, prose-poets, or scientific novelists, appear when confronted with Sophocles, with Shakespeare, with Goethe, with the sad-browed Florentine? It is a trial which they cannot escape, although neither the French nor the English newspapers have room to determine it. Aristophanes, if he could pass the three-headed dog, and write a new "Frogs," would be the fittest of arbitrators in a dispute like that between Realism and Romanticism, which bears unexpected and laughable affinities to the controversy in which Æschylus is pitted against Euripides at the close of that magnificent burlesque. As quoting Greek has gone out of fashion, let Horace illustrate for us the undoubted resemblance between old-world quarrels and the wrangling of to-day, with his—

Ne quicunque Deus, quicunque adhibebitur heros,
Regali conspectus in auro nuper et ostro,
Migret in obscuras humili sermone tabernas.

Or, to translate with the help of a "modern instance," the question is, whether Victor Hugo's preterhuman characters

should degenerate into boon companions of Coppeau and Mes Bottes in "L'Assommoir." But now it is time to hear the evidence, concerning these rags of Telephus, and who first canonised them in the novels of the past century.

Balzac, surely, will be the answer. If Romanticism means selective art, the revelation of the ideal in Nature as a living whole, it is manifest that the author of "Le Père Goriot" and "Illusions Perdues" was no Romanticist. For to him Nature was a mere bundle of forces which might be pulled out and examined like so many nervous filaments. In "Louis Lambert," which contains Balzac's philosophy, substance is only matter, the human will a voltaic pile, and God Himself a luminous fluid. Everywhere, from "La Peau de Chagrin" to that most desolate and unethical of tragedies, "Le Cousin Pons," we see the individual, however strongly drawn, at the mercy of his surroundings and of his nature. Hence the environment is described in microscopic detail, stone fitted into stone as in a mosaic, all the joints visible. The man's own mind was a collection of bric-à-brac. In the graphic outward presentment of things inanimate,—of houses, doors, staircases, chairs and curtains, old lumber-chests, pictures, furniture in general, and every kind of decay,—he has no rival but Dickens, and no superior. On all these objects—or subject-objects—he bestows a phantom existence; they stand bewitched and diabolic amid the deep Rembrandt shadows which he likes to move in. He took for his province the anatomy of social phenomena,—the study, so he calls it in "Les Employés," of human insect-life. And he found indispensable for his purpose the technique of trade and manufacture, terms borrowed from the kitchen, the stable, the shop, the counting-house. Long before George Eliot, he invented scientific metaphor. The only style he did not practise, even in "Les Paysans," was the rustic, not permissible in academic ears. But M. Taine has sketched with great humour the consternation of the French scholar and gentleman moulded on academic traditions, who should attempt for the first time to read the Babylonish jargon which Balzac has substituted for the clear analytic language of the eighteenth century. If he has certain of the qualities of Dickens, and is grotesque,

prolific, and in secret alliance with the powers of night ; if his affection for villains male and female is akin to Thackeray's paternal devotion to Becky Sharp and Barry Lyndon ; if his want of reticence rises almost to Swiftean grandeur ;—there is also something of Thomas Carlyle in the splashes of significant paint which he hurls at the canvas, and in the spasmodic dialect that seems his own. Here was genius without the corresponding talents, for we cannot but assent when biographers tell us that both these singular "Impressionists" stumbled into literature rather than found it by vocation. The born artist is known by his creative instinct. Balzac and Carlyle do not so much create as literally "compose." With never-ending struggles they add sentence to sentence, tearing every phrase (if one may employ a harsh metaphor) out of their very vitals. And when the work is done, the author lies half dead. He has little joy in his gifts, for the inductive method, wholly intent on the succession of particulars, can afford no outlook to the soul ; neither does it go up with Moses to the Pisgah heights below which the Promised Land with its glad rivers and golden harvests reaches from the mountains to the mighty sea, in distant yet clear perspective.

But the method was adapted to the age ; and perhaps no other, in France at any rate, would have succeeded in the delineation of what was to be recorded for a happier time. In this sense Balzac may be compared with Tacitus. It has been acutely remarked that his world is made up of passions and interests ; that principle has hardly a place in it ; and that his characters are almost always intrinsically vicious. To blunt the edge of this criticism would not be an easy task. Granting that man is a bundle of forces, those forces will appear in a civilisation like the Parisian either as passions thwarted by interests, or as interests receiving a double momentum from passion. And should higher aspirations be found there by happy accident, a writer who worships brute strength will show us virtue defeated, aspirations fooled, and innocence put up for sale. It is the moral again and again implied in the story of Rastignac, of Lucien de Rubempré, of Madame Hulot of Pons and Schmucke,

of the poor imbecile Curé de Tours. It is Vautrin's philosophy, which, to no small extent, was Balzac's own.

Now the very defects which repel and dishearten us in this Philistine genius were in a wonderful degree potent to create the impression that he aimed at. We must not look to him for a picture of the contemporaneous movements in Germany, England, or Italy. Though he knew a little of foreign countries, it was only as we know the planets Mars and Venus, or the cloud-belts in Jupiter. The "dolorous valley of the Seine" was wide enough for him. As Dr. Johnson could not live away from Fleet Street, so Balzac was ever returning to the beloved mud and dust, the rain and flickering lights, the crowd on the Boulevards, and the loneliness of those dismal cut-throat streets which he has shown as in a stereoscope at the beginning of the "*Histoire des Treize*." "O Paris!" he exclaims with enthusiasm, "he that has not admired thy sombre landscapes, thy broken jets of light, thy deep and silent alleys without issue; he that has not listened to thy murmurs between midnight and two hours after, knows nothing of the true poetry which is in thee, or of thy large and curious contrasts." And he proceeds to sketch the Rue Soly in colours at once ignoble and overpowering. Ignoble! It is the proper word for Balzac's subject-matter, though more or less unjust if applied to the man. He displays too vast an energy, too extensive a knowledge of human nature, to be thrust outside the Temple of Fame on the score of his bad manners. But the sculptor is more than the anatomist; and the question of Realism must be decided by contrasting the Venus of Milo with Balzac's supreme creation, the Venus of the Père la Chaise. For it is in consummating the type of the ignoble, or even of the cadaverous, that he excels.

The "*Comédie Humaine*" is, then, chiefly a chronicle of Paris from 1815 to 1850, with a thousand illustrations in colour, by one who was modern and Parisian to the core. It is the world of the noblesse and the money market; of journalism, art, and fashion; of political religion and religious politics; of pleasure, intrigue, crime, adultery, and universal dissipation. It shows us the military

hardness of the Empire; the belated Voltairianism of the Bourbons who had never got beyond '89; the avatar of a gilded bourgeoisie, rejoicing in its money-bags; and some remnants of a Christianity to which, as the Abbé de la Mennais was crying in 1825 at the top of his voice, all classes had become indifferent. And the ruling deity, the God who appears in the dénouement of its tragedies and entanglements, is Money. Money is the goal of ambition and the standard of success.

There surely never was poet or historian who had more faith in money than Balzac. Compared with him Adam Smith is Adam unfallen in Paradise, McCulloch an innocent from the Isle of Skye. In his pages Money is the great personage round whom the whole drama centres; a fortune, as in "*La Maison Nucingen*" or "*César Birotteau*," becomes, it has been well said, the heroine whose adventures we follow with bated breath. It is an amusement to open his volumes at random and count how many times out of a given number the words "francs," "écus," "livres de rente," leap at once into our sight. Bills of exchange, quotations for corn and wine, for hoops and staves, old iron and upholstery, fill the stage and elbow one another like farmers on a market-day. The calculations of prices made by prince and poet, duchess and courtesan, by journalist, employé, and social reformer, would do credit to the twelve tribes of Israel. Not one of Balzac's feminine characters but can keep books like a Rothschild. The most idyllic scenes end in happy lovers picking up gold and silver, as on a Tom Tiddler's ground. Marriage is a financial question with this most particular of notaries public; but equally so is the breaking of the marriage vow. Baron Nucingen contrives, we are told, to shift the burden of his wife's luxuries to the shoulders of her follower, Eugène de Rastignac. Satan himself cannot buy a man's soul but it must be done on stamped paper and amid the roar of the Bourse.¹ And Balzac's Utopias, of which he has planned half a dozen with the patience of a land surveyor—one in "*Le Curé de Village*," a second more interesting in "*Le Médecin de Campagne*"—are all situated in the

¹ "Melmoth Réconcilié."

same latitudes. They are of the earth, earthy: prosperous villages and thriving agriculture occupy the foreground; if there be any vision in the clouds, it is materialist, Swedenborgian, an ecstasy of scentless tulips, musical instruments, brazen and luminous ether, with certain mixed faculties of the soul to be developed on the lines of Mesmerism. No description will convey the feeling of mountainous oppression under which the spirit labours as one by one the powers of reason, love, and beauty, are materialised at our magician's touch. He works with a reversed wand, bringing down heaven out of its primal sphere and clothing the seraphim in Parisian drapery. His religious system is little better than a delusion of Cagliostro; while the affection of one human being for another in these stories becomes a mania bred of philtres and intoxicating potions. With him the spirit is but a more finely-woven flesh. The whole world is artificial like its expression, money; or it is monstrous, unhealthy, chaotic.

We said, in discussing Victor Hugo, that in common with all the French Romanticists, he aimed at the infinite by representing the abnormal. It is a point of the first importance to remark that this, too, is Balzac's *modus operandi*—above all when he is dealing with passion. We shall observe the same principle in Flaubert and in Zola. The abnormal, *not* the ideal; for truly to conceive and to show forth the human type would have committed these men to a belief and a discipline against which they rebelled. The Sophoclean standard, "man as he ought to be," did not please them at all. In reading the modern French, we cannot but feel that they explain human nature as Mr. Charles Darwin has done in certain chapters of his "Descent of Man," by resolving its highest faculties into appetites derived from the brute. Balzac delights in painting beast-natures that have got into the man's hide, especially those of the baser sort—the hyena, jackal, fox, vulture, ape, and cobra. Even his women characters are strangely animal-like. He gives us the "natural history of man" from which the heavenly fire has been damped out; an archangel fallen to the beast, no longer mindful of his origin. And here we come upon

the explanation of what M. Taine has admirably noticed, that Balzac's stories abound in monomania. Each of the instincts is dressed up as a man or a woman; nay more, the most lovely and exquisite of human qualities is reduced to an instinct. Nor does he hesitate before the simply unnatural. There can be little in M. Zola which exceeds the horror of what he has permitted himself to deal with on occasion. It is a hard saying, but cannot well be denied, that for the so-called Realist "nothing is sacred, from the womb to the grave." The high Northern virtue of reticence, which has given strength and delicacy to our literature, finds scant honour among those, and they are the majority of French writers, who prefer the *sel gaulois* to Attic salt. "Prudish Albion" is a word of reproach not spared to us by grave critics; while our "hypocrisy" (though to ourselves it seems mere decent reserve) is accounted the most intolerable of the bourgeois vices incident to a nation of shopkeepers. Balzac himself with an amusing *mal-à-propos* charged even the easy-going George Sand with this English defect when she found the taste of his "Contes Drôlatiques" somewhat too revolting. But the coarseness of the man is not his worst fault. He indulges a curiosity, not so much scientific as prurient, which, when it has torn away the rags of shivering humanity and exposed its sores, foolishly imagines that it knows all which can be known. As though the veil of Isis, which neither prophet nor seer has lifted, might be rudely swept aside by the surgeon or the criminal magistrate! It is not so steep a descent as some of his critics would have us believe, from the unashamed depravity of "La Cousine Bette," or the strange suggestions of other stories which cannot be quoted here, to "Nana" and its compeers. The principle which Zola has deliberately recognised in "Le Roman Expérimental" governs every production of Balzac; both writers are convinced that artistic or comely concealment—the clothing with more abundant honour of that which is less honourable—is a lie against Nature.

As therefore Hugo exalts the mad maternal instinct in "Notre Dame de Paris," so Balzac has created the monomaniac father, a strangely unpleasant figure with-

out grace or reverence, in "Le Père Goriot." "La Recherche de l'Absolu" chronicles the revolutions of money in the hands of Balthazar Cläes, the monomaniac chemist. Valerie Marneffe, in "Les Parents Pauvres," is the married courtesan who realises some type of perfection in the lowest abyss. Philippe Brideau, the soldier-scoundrel; Grandet, the miser; Gobseck, the usurer; Louis Lambert, the imbecile metaphysician; Hulot, the slave of his senses; and above all, Vautrin, the Mephistopheles who is at the centre of the "Comédie Humaine"—all these are as blindly powerful, and as little capable of resisting their destiny, as the forces of Nature itself. Instincts may be noble or the reverse; but in every case Balzac's characters yield to a wild excess of virtue (as in Madame Hulot and Madame Cläes) or to a native selfishness, of which the gaze is so completely turned inward that the whole world becomes its pasture, like the sea entering a blind shell and feeding the creature coiled up within. From this point of view, Brideau, Cläes, and General Hulot are among the most astonishing births of fiction. In their kind they are perfect; nothing can be added, nothing taken away from the monsters; but monsters they remain. We do not imply that the like of these ghastly beings has never walked the world. Experience, conversant with prisons, asylums, and reformatories, would have strange stories to tell, confirming some part of their witness. But the pathological—as in these days we should never be weary of repeating—is not the human. And if we will not hear Moses and the prophets, we may at all events believe Darwin, whose teaching from first to last implies that to be governed by instinct is to fall back in the scale of evolution, is atavism in the strongest sense of the term, or, more simply, is degradation.

How remarkable it is that Balzac looks upon good people as dupes, who are fooled by their fancy of a moral law not anywhere realised! They are "cheated in the bargain of life," he says. They sadly obey their conscience; but they envy or perhaps admire the audacity of the libertines, being uncertain, like Balzac himself and M. Renan since, whether vice is not on the side of the

nature of things. "Je vois d'ici," says Vautrin in a famous speech, "la grimace de ces braves gens, si Dieu nous faisait la mauvaise plaisanterie de s'absenter au jugement dernier." We may be sure that Balzac enjoyed writing such words, as he found a congenial employment, not in showing "how lovely virtue is," but in the precise contrary, in making it ugly, foolish, lame, stupid, and ridiculous. He knew little about it. His young girls, Eugénie Grandet, La Fosseuse, Pauline, Marguerite, are all spotted like second-hand silks or worn muslin. They have not the gracious innocence of their youth, the delicate imagination to which it becomes an opening flower full of perfume and tender hues of the morning. There is no dew upon their foreheads, or maidenly reserve in their nature; it is only in their society manners at the best. What can we say of his repentant women, Madame Graslin, Madame de Beauséant? Their change is not a conversion, it is the result of a catastrophe; and while we pity we do not feel with them. Sympathy is a rare quality in Balzac. He harrows and rends the heart, but the eyes will never drop medicinal tears over scenes which evoke more wonder than kindness, and which are often too painful for gentler emotions to be stirred by them. It is essentially a man's world in which he moves, for the green-room and the footlights, if they introduce beings of feminine appearance, are not the true woman's sphere. And the great ladies, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the Marquise d'Espard, and all their brilliant troupe, differ nothing in nature, but only in wearing real diamonds instead of paste, from the Florines and Coralies, or the incredibly corrupt Aquilinas with whom they dispute over a common prey.

You see, reader, how impossible it is to speak of Balzac without running against the bad company which he keeps. With him it is a necessity of temperament to paint in staring colours and violent tones, to fill the air with cries of vulgar passion, brute struggling against brute, the heavenly ideal far withdrawn behind a sky like brass. He has been called a seer—*un voyant*. But he sees the infinitely little. He searches the "human face divine" with microscopes; of the fair Greek gods he

makes monsters like the men of Brobdingnag. Once more, in his strange resemblance to Carlyle, he has eyes for the outside of things, paints graphically, though without beauty of line, and is convinced that these minute personal touches reveal the character. It is the mistake of phrenologists. The utmost we shall attain by such interpretation is the *mode* of the character, not the man himself. The taking smile may be inherited, and may signify in the Lucien de Rubempré who stands before us nothing but his superficial good nature. The frowning forehead and near-sighted eyes may conceal from the casual observer that there is a wide vision in the soul. "His outer mask," said Alcibiades in the "Symposium," speaking of Socrates, "is the carved head of the Silenus; but when he is opened, what temperance there is residing within!" What would Carlyle have made of such a mask? Here again the appearance is not the personality, and the fact that a man has had ancestors cannot destroy his freedom.

We must limit the seership, then, of Honoré de Balzac somewhat in this way. He saw, as Lucifer sees in his peregrinations about the earth, those tendencies and actions that run down towards the deep out of which, by endless heroic effort and the grace of God, man has raised himself to better things. The Devil notes weakness, the matter of temptation, where the Heavenly Powers look upon struggling goodness and stoop to its aid. It is the failure which invariably engages Balzac's attention where virtue is in question. Vice he intends to be triumphant, nay, magnanimous by reason of its great victory. In another than the Scriptural sense it overcomes the world. To be on the side of the moral law is to court defeat. See the conclusion of "Le Père Goriot." Rastignac has been taught wisdom by experience; and to what does it amount? That he must perform a surgical operation on his heart—must have done with pity, remorse, and principle. The modern Lear has been the dupe of paternity. Let not his friend Eugène be the dupe of any natural feeling which would keep him from trampling down the weak on his way to fortune. Or study, again, the long and feverish story of one whom we like in spite

of his maudlin weakness and poet's vanity, Lucien de Rubempré, sonneteer and suicide. His "illusions" were not of the noblest; he thought to win place and renown by his verses, not to obey the divine inspiration, as our English Milton did—Milton, who stands too far removed from the "*Comédie Humaine*" to be so much as dreamt of in its philosophy. But Lucien bore on his brow the star of genius. And he is dragged through the filth of Paris, made acquainted with things vile and mean, intoxicated with a success which was not wine but wormwood, drying up the brain and the blood, until he comes to a shameful end. The illusion which he had lost was, we suppose, that it is possible for a man who has light within him to defy the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is a strange lesson to teach young men entering upon life. Not that Balzac's indictment of the ways of journalism is wanting in truth or appositeness. The evil which he depicts is more rampant in our day of limitless news-vending and news-making than it could have been in the Paris of 1843. On that subject who, with eyes in his head, can cherish illusions? But how does a character like Lucien's represent the cause of goodness, or his ignominious suicide prove that the supreme Powers are against it? Is not this the moral whispered by the story-teller? If not, where is the struggle between light and dark which the title suggests?

The truth is that Balzac was a materialist; that he worshipped force, and did not believe in God. His religion is sentiment, his Church a department of State; his respect for authority and the *ancien régime* is founded on the deepest unbelief in human nature. To him the ordinary man is an evil beast, in need at every moment of chains and scourges. The measure of man, he would assert, is the lowest to which he can fall, not the height to which he has attained. And so he does not purify his pity and terror by the thought of eternal justice. He had no vision of the world to come. Dante's Hell is less inhuman than Balzac's present age. He does not paint the civilisation of his time, but the evils which threatened it; nor the science of the Ampères and the Fraunhofers, but the mad alchemy of an ignorant man, who strives

to reproduce in his laboratory the solar activities extinct on earth from geological periods. His metaphysics are an attempt to make things visible which cannot fall under the senses; his God is an attenuated gas, and the soul an electric-machine. He was an obstinate visionary, not capable of rising into the light of reason like the masters of those who know, but abounding in the refractions, so to call them, of a strong and tyrannous personality. Some odd resemblance which he bore to Napoleon outwardly may be extended to the world of creations over which he ruled with despotic power. The brute force, the huge fever-dream fulfilled with relentless energy, the absence of all that is spontaneous and delicate, the lack of that persuasiveness which belongs to the highest genius, are traits common to both. Expect neither poetry nor chivalry in such men! they know that strength, of the head and the muscles, will make its way with the many. But they have not learnt the secret of weakness, the charm of sympathy, the fascination which subdues by giving in. With clamour and the breaking of shields they advance, as it seems to them, on the high road of victory; and the great calm world, the order of nature keeping its eternal course, is hidden from them. The noise of battle is not progress, as Napoleon discovered in good time. And the "drama of adultery," the "world of passions and interests," is not life, but only the material of it to these and those.

Here is pretty much all the evidence bearing on the relation of Balzac to the school of Realism; and if we examine it impartially, we shall find that while he has contributed certain elements of great importance to it as a movement, he remains detached from it by an originality of aim and a mode of artistic composition which none of his successors have rivalled. In Balzac the details are photographed, the material atmosphere is given, the persons are treated as centres of force acting on one another according to their degree of energy. So much would be sufficient, if it were all, to produce as a natural consequence what M. Zola means by his "novel of experience"—not a transcript of the facts of life, but a presentation of such of them as will most easily be rendered in

the language and on the theory of Materialism. But Balzac has not stopped at this point. He has shown us *characters*, which, instead of being melted into the stream of sensations, are constant to themselves, unyielding even to the extent of monomania, and which develop their phases by an inward law. They know nothing, indeed, of free-will, but they are fixed natures,—species, not accidental gatherings of refuse to be scattered by the next flood, which is M. Zola's conception of human beings. For Balzac there do exist true individuals, whose nature is their destiny. And thus he intends his stories to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. In the Romantic period, tragedies were wrought out by the combination of a high divine or demonic element with the human, *Schicksal und eigene Schuld*. Balzac interprets "Fate" by character as well as by environment. But M. Zola, following, as he supposes, the prophets of evolution, can find no "species," no fixed quantities whatever in the universe at large. It is to him a perpetual flux, and the one way to render it is by the "photography of the moment." Now, there is in Balzac not a single character which we could justly call a photograph. They are concrete types, abounding in capricious and grotesque traits, larger than human, and never commonplace. Set one of them alive on the Boulevards, and he would be like Peter Schlemihl, the man without a shadow, something portentous or uncanny. The romantic *ichor* mingled with their blood gives them an air as from another world; and to another world than that of the pavement or the police-court they belong: to the planet "Balzac," which has its own laws and peculiarities—and again to literature, with its necessary conventions, which can be transgressed only by the destruction of the art itself. For when Aristotle says that poetry is an imitation of nature, he implies that it cannot be identical with nature, else it would cease to be imitation.

Upon which, taking up the challenge that Balzac would not perhaps have accepted, comes forward a true but most perverse and misleading genius, in the person of the renowned Gustave Flaubert, who boldly undertakes to write "objective fiction," wherein there shall be as

little of "intention" or of "final causes" as he admitted in Nature itself. And he produces one masterpiece, "Madame Bovary"; various splendid failures,—we mean "Salammbô" and "La Tentation de Saint Antoine";—and two unimaginable compositions, the better known of which, "L'Education Sentimentale," we take to be the dullest book that a man of genius ever inflicted on our race. We have read it, and we survive,—but not "to tell the tale." Let that be undertaken by some limited company where each reader shall be answerable only for what he has got through. Flaubert attempted the impossible; and, as M. de Calonne would have said, he achieved it. But he did not reach an "objective art" in the sense he proposed, and for very good reasons. What he did, amongst other things, was to help forward the Realism of which he has judged so contemptuously.

We have come to a place where many roads meet, and where the affinities between the kinds of the modern French novel, how unlike soever, begin to appear. In the very height of the Romantic movement, as we have observed, Balzac, with his army of stage carpenters and scene-painters, had set up a theatre of his own, where, if the action was fanciful or melodramatic, the local colour, costumes, and language, were taken from the street. The Romanticist understood by "reality" something primeval and infinite, the unfathomable world which we call "Nature," the mighty monster full of beauty and terror, "ever living, never advancing," and though strangely silent in man's presence, yet somehow akin to him: this, on the one hand; but, on the other, that inward existence, all thought and passion, which burns up in its flame the bonds of society as though they were threads of flax. In the "Comédie Humaine," however, we see not the individual in his solitary greatness, but the city or class to which he belongs, and him struggling with it,—not the sky and the wilderness, but the haunts of men sheltered from the sun and the elemental powers. Yet a third influence may be discerned in 1833, which, though it held of the Romantic school, was fated to mingle with the current of Realism lower down. If the motto of Victor Hugo and George Sand was "Nature," that of

Balzac's "Comédie" was "Life." And the third school, represented by Théophile Gautier, we may distinguish as that of "Art."

We have all read the praise of "Mademoiselle de Maupin" in Mr. Swinburne's sonnet as "the golden book of spirit and sense, the holy writ of beauty." To the general public, Gautier is known simply as its author. But he has written many other volumes, including "Le Capitaine Fracasse" and "Le Roman de la Momie," which allow a juster estimate of his powers than this idle piece of schoolboy wickedness, with its sham picturesque and its scarcely more real erotics. A consummate master of French, endowed with a colour-sense which would not have disgraced Titian, and careless of the meaning of life, he was the very man to found a school of "Decadence," in which sensuous feeling and artistic *insouciance* should be all in all. Why must Art be subservient to ends beyond itself? Why not paint for painting's sake, and, "in the dense, dim air of life," seek after "beauty's excellence" without reference to any other, and especially with deliberate contempt for the "moral journalist, who has a wife and daughters": in short, for M. Prudhomme, as the French have it, or, as we say in England, for Mrs. Grundy? In the preface to "Mademoiselle de Maupin," from which we are quoting, the author amusingly describes his unsanctified procedure as "Romanticist shamelessness." But there is a strong family likeness between that and the certainly not more repulsive kind which exists in the works of M. Zola, and even of M. Paul Bourget. The cultivation of form, without regard to matter, has invariably degenerated into the worship of the five senses. "Art for Art" is, in the strictest meaning of the word, idolatry, the taking of shadow for substance and resting in phenomena. It has not "learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession"; or "to use the beauties of earth as steps along which to mount upward from fair forms to fair practices," in the "contemplation of beauty absolute." Théophile Gautier might despise the "rehabilitation of virtue undertaken by the newspapers"; but these are not the words of a "moral journalist with a family of daughters." They were spoken

by a certain Diotima to the old man Socrates, and occur in a dialogue which M. Prudhomme has probably never read.¹ The notion of Art for Art's sake is by no means Platonic; it belongs to an age the mark of which is utter disbelief in all that the senses cannot grasp. But thus it came about that Gautier, being enamoured of sounds and lights and colours, and having an exquisite perception of beauty of form, was anticipating, sixty years ago, the time in which "decadence" would seem natural, putrefaction the chief condition of life, and perverted instincts the true humanity.

To Gautier's idolatry of the outward shows of things, no less than to the harmonious rhetoric of Chateaubriand, Flaubert was indebted for examples which he outstripped. In the technique of composition he holds a place apart, and—why should we not be generous and add?—supreme. He is not one of the greatest masters of literature; but he is of writing. When the Romantic school had as good as come to an end, "Madame Bovary" appeared; and there is hardly a volume of note in French fiction since that time which has not shown a trace of its influence. That influence has even made its way into English and American literature, as we may convince ourselves by reading, for instance, the opening of Mr. Howell's "A Foregone Conclusion." And not altogether undeservedly. In M. Brunetière's unsparing but impartial account of French "Naturalism," the tribute paid to Flaubert's extraordinary grasp of certain methods, and to his enlargement or novel application of the procedures of his Romanticist predecessors, is no less handsome than instructive.²

But as "Don Quixote" may be said to have killed chivalry, though its author was full of the chivalric spirit, so "Madame Bovary" was a deadly satire upon French Romanticism. Yet Flaubert, by the incurable magnificence of his language, by his love for the strange and the eccentric, and by his disdain of middle-class vulgarity, betrayed affinities which he did not care to own. In the effort to become a Realist, he literally killed himself,

¹ Plato, "Symposium," 211.

² "Le Roman Naturaliste," pp. 135-181.

falling dead against his writing-desk while intent upon a work which should bear no token of its author's feelings. It could not be done. But the subjective, the personal style might be transformed, by skill or violence, into another, so much more akin to science than to art that, in comparison, it would deserve to be called objective and neutral. It is a style desperately fatiguing, impassively cruel, in its hard coldness far more "Satanic" than the rhapsodies of a Lélia or a Manfred. The passions no longer "move at the command of virtue," as in the sentimental days of Richardson. They move at the command of the physiologist who has taken out his note-book and is preparing a memoir for the Academy of Scientific Questions. The place and the time of the experiment are carefully chosen. It is Balzac's "environment" (*milieu*) over again, but the details which make it have ceased to be capricious or highly coloured. It is Gautier's manner, without his flush of impassioned hues, his purple and ivory, his wine and sunlight. "The form, the form alone is eloquent"; but then, as a corrective, the real is the commonplace; and there is no other real. Or, if there is a depth below the surface of things, it is unknown and unknowable. For Gustave Flaubert the spiritual world of faith or philosophy does not exist; it is a chimera. Things themselves are but an illusion; the relations between them are all we can lay hold of. And the laws of those relations make the drama.¹ In these confessions we have travelled an immense distance from Balzac's monomaniac characters; as for free-will, it has sunk to depths in the sky where no instrument can discern a trace of it, not one streak of nebula in the boundless azure. "I believe," wrote Flaubert, "that great art is scientific and impersonal." What else could it be, on his principles? For he read the universe, not as a Divine hieroglyphic, but like a modern newspaper, its sense complete and trivial. "Death," he said, "has, perhaps, no more to reveal than life."

Like Brisset, in "La Peau de Chagrin," he was a doctor of the materialist school, who refused under any circumstances to believe that the spirit could modify its

¹ "Lettres à George Sand," Introd. p. xv.

surroundings. He was also of Obermann's way of thinking, and found a terrible silence in the Heavens. To him religion, as it appears in history, was a succession of blood-stained or hysterical illusions. The most powerful emotions he calls forth are physical disgust,—of which "Salammbò" is full to overflowing,—terror, and a sense of the strain of life which lingers without expectation of a morrow. In work such as Flaubert's—and the remark holds good of George Eliot—there is a decreasing vitality, due, as we feel convinced, to the hopelessness which eats away its heart. Balzac appealed frankly to sensation; though he created an imaginary world, it rested on the real, and in his sensual eyes was appetising enough. He did not more than half despise the creatures by whom it was tenanted; he had a fellow-feeling, not only for the Daniel d'Arthez and the Paulines, but for the Vautrins and the Coralies. Now, Flaubert, though he professed to rate sympathy high, as a writer had little or none. He thinks meanly of the human spirit, and takes it as a compliment when some short-sighted admirer tells him that he is hard upon mankind. Truly, we suppose he belonged to the race of the gods, and could afford to be insolent! "You may fatten the human beast," he writes to George Sand; "give him straw up to the stomach, and gild his manger, but he will remain a brute, say what you please. All the progress one can hope for is to make the brute less mischievous. But as for elevating the thoughts of the masses, or giving them a wider and consequently less anthropomorphic conception of God, I doubt it, I doubt it."¹ The stupidity of the race, he often cries, is enough to choke him. To dissect them—as in "Madame Bovary"—he calls his revenge.

And yet more as in "L'Education Sentimentale." We may allow to M. Guy de Maupassant that, in spite of its seeming to have been written without a plan, it is a deep and bitter study of common existence, a journal of the daily platitudes, of the levels and mediocrities of existence. The interest which in "Madame Bovary" centres round one figure, making it typical and therefore not "real" in the photographic sense, is here scattered;

¹ "Lettres à George Sand," p. 63.

while the dramatic movement is tortuous, thwarted every moment by streamlets of public or private events which retard the catastrophe indefinitely. Flaubert's purpose, perhaps, was to bring his pseudo-hero and heroine, Frédéric Moreau and Madame Arnoux, up to the barriers of romantic or desperate resolutions, and then, in his great scorn for the ordinary mortal, to show how they failed to leap them. It is Realism, no doubt; men and women are not always heroic, whether in virtue or in guilt. But a larger knowledge of even the despised middle class would have taught him that courage and self-denial, instead of being rare, may be met with in every city and almost in every street. The moral of "*La Dame aux Camélias*" is truer to life. It is not those who have seen most of their fellow-creatures to whom heroism becomes incredible. Flaubert was a lonely spirit; he had not overcome the illusion that men of letters were of quite a different paste from mankind at large.¹ And, as M. Brunetière observes with epigrammatic bitterness, mankind revenged itself on the genius who was always satirising "that fool of a multitude" by goading him on to write "*L'Education Sentimentale*." If it was "humiliating to be a man," why did he spend seven years in minutely registering the scorn-provoking details? Was it that others might continue the task, and descend from the epic of platitude to the epic of pathology?

Romantic elements may still be discerned in the dramatic situations of "*Madame Bovary*," in the wild and grandiose though horror-striking battles, sieges, famines, slaughters, and Moloch sacrifices of "*Salammbô*"; in the fantastic, high-coloured procession of gods and religions that sweeps as on wings of sullen tempest through "*La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*"; in the dead gleams of sapphire, as from a Gothic window, which float over the story of "*St. Julien l'Hospitalier*." To mingle sentiment and sensation, to give the abstract a living form,—making light visible, as it were, in the rainbow, that essentially surprising evocation of colour from the impalpable air,—this was precisely the aim of Romantic

¹ "*Lettres à George Sand*," p. 118.

literature. And if Flaubert's greatest triumph was achieved in doing so with common materials, with Norman backgrounds, and the sedges in the wayside ditch, he must have had implicit faith in the method which he enlarged. But in what else did he believe? Alas, in nothing! He was a worker in precious stones to whom no stones were precious—a dilettante, a Nihilist. When he touches the life of the spirit, his tongue stammers, the miracle of his stately rhetoric ceases. He knows how to compare sentiment with sensation; but he never rises to the realm of the *Idea* which has naught in common with either.

Let now a few years pass, and one who did not possess Flaubert's genius, but whose cast of mind was a vulgar repetition of his own in this respect,—we mean Jules Vallès,—will exhibit as “Jacques Vingtras” a total incapacity of transcending the base material, so that he must illustrate one piece of wood by another, so to speak, and fall to the lowest level of metaphor. In Flaubert's correspondence, as in his novels, there are indications of a similar defect. The peculiarity is remarkable. Modern French literature tends more and more to become “word-painting”; it affects the sensitive memory, awakening it by scents and voluptuous sounds, by a selection of delicate, or a barbaric display of ill-matched, colours. In other terms, it has descended from the region of the spirit, and is not so much Greek as Oriental. Its appeal to the senses is incessant. It has two kinds of style, the brutal and the exceedingly refined; but Pascal or Dante would look in vain through its entire range for the severe. And the logic of the change is incontestable. Do we grant to Mr. Herbert Spencer that consciousness is nothing but a stream of feelings, faint or vivid? What else, then, can literature be deemed, except the reflection of the same stream, always of feelings, whether it glides smoothly along in a monotonous current, or leaps upon us in foam and fury?

Thus, a young critic, M. Hennequin, whose early death interrupted a brilliant if eccentric career, has defined literature in significant words as “a combination of phrases intended to produce in the reader or hearer a special

kind of emotion, viz. the æsthetic."¹ A "kind of emotion"! It follows, as his benevolent defender, M. Tissot, grants, that the objective value of criticism can no longer be maintained, for how shall we reduce the varying emotions of individuals to a common standard? But, we ask in our turn, is there no appeal to reason, or is reason but a "plexus" of emotions? Apparently it is the latter doctrine, disguised in the language of Kant, or asserted with brutal frankness by M. Zola, which governs the ironical yet infinitely minute observation of Flaubert, the psychology of Stendhal, and M. Bourget's despairing, if tender and slightly rose-scented, scepticism. Want of faith in God and in the seriousness of life, which is only not to be railed at because it has never promised to satisfy our longing for the True and the Good,—does it not all come to this at last?² Behind the veil there is, according to Flaubert, nothing. The curtain *is* the picture. Is it a poor distemper drawing, crowded with lame, blind, and impotent mortals struggling in hungry confusion? Even so, it is all the artist has to reproduce, and a wise man will set about the task with a quiet but ineffable scorn of the characters which he is tracing. They are mean, but they are real. Flaubert cannot sympathise with George Sand, who, as he tells her often, is the dupe of her own nobleness, and creates what she believes in. Man is a brute; show him accordingly in his brutishness, with his rags and festering wounds; or, if you will, practise a grimmer irony, let him appear in the dull earthly hues which forbid him to excite even the compassion of the army surgeon or the interest which springs from tears and misery. The rags of Telephus were at any rate picturesque; but the bourgeois in his black coat and kid gloves is merely contemptible.

When we have come into these depths,—the *selva selvaggia* where no ray of the ideal penetrates,—we look round with a certain fearful expectation for the creatures haunting them, not insignificant buzzing swarms such as "L'Education Sentimentale" torments us with, but the species obscene and ferocious, nourished on blood and lust, that are their suitable tenants. Flaubert, romantic

¹ Tissot, p. 328.

² See "André Cornélis," *passim*.

in his way of throwing back horror and magnificence into the past, was satisfied to show us the Carthage of Hanno and Hamilcar enveloped, as the tragedian might say, in "a shower of bloody hail," storm-swept and rained upon as with fire. But it was possible to come nearer home, and to mingle the revolting with the trivial, as gutters which have run with household rinsings may, on a day of barricades, run with blood. 'Après la littérature de sang, la littérature de fange,' wrote Théophile Gautier jestingly; and he was thus far a true prophet that these are types of imagination which pass quickly into one another. From the *roman bourgeois* to the *roman canaille* is but a step. Nay, as the De Goncourts have proved in "Faustin" and "Germinie Lacerteux," the boudoir, with its Japanese lacquer and artistic decorations, may look straight down into what M. Zola has justly styled "le milieu empesté de nos faubourgs." Take a large sheet with a lamp behind it, let one of these groups of figures pass over it as they live, and you will produce the divers kinds of Realism, the sanguinary, the muddy, and the "quintessential." The brothers De Goncourt will design costumes and furniture corresponding to each with historic fidelity; and M. Zola will supply characters to live and move in the "Troisième Dessous" from which demons, ghosts, and other preternatural horrors rise upon the stage. But the best guide in that world is M. Macé, charged with the *police des mœurs* and well read in the *dossiers* which contain, as it were, a night-view of Paris enlightened by the dark lantern of the Criminal Courts.

Flaubert suffered from one great defect as a Realist. He could not abdicate his imperial style. The De Goncourts, too, though more pretentious than successful in moulding to their wish an artistic language, were as proud of their skill in mixing colours on the palette as of their encyclopædic knowledge. But the man whose name, during some twenty years, stood out for the practice and theory of Realism, M. Emile Zola, was burdened, happily, with none of these inheritances from the lettered past. He gloried in being as ill-read as any of his drunken operatives or "daughters of joy." "It is true," remarks M. Brunetière pleasantly, "that he has cultivated his

ignorance; but it was a natural gift to begin with." "Non cuicunque datum est habere nasum," said the Roman epigram. Nor is it every one in these years of enlightenment who could be so robustly individual as never to have heard, for instance, of the name of Niebuhr, and to confess it, as M. Zola has done. He vied in his contempt for history with a Texan cowboy; but, more sagacious than Flaubert, he chose, or rather settled down by instinct upon, a style which was on a level with his subject. Of "L'Assommoir" he declares boldly that it is a work of truth, the first romance of the people which "does not tell lies and which has the smell of the people." Afterwards he had, in his own opinion, uttered the first true word about the peasantry in "La Terre"; and it is probable that no one will complain of the absence therein of local colour or of a speech adequate to reproduce the abominations which he had set himself to describe. He mocked and flouted the canon of French taste established by Boileau, which reads somewhat ludicrously in the light of current literature:—

Le lecteur français veut être respecté,
Du moindre sens impur la liberté l'outrage,
Si la pudeur des mots n'en adoucit l'image.

The excellent Puritanical Boileau! Perhaps, after all, modesty is in the mind and not in the words a man uses. Flaubert goes near the mark when he writes that "cynicism is allied to virtue"; and certainly there is truth in Coleridge's observation, that Fielding's hearty laugh clears the air. But we are compelled straightway to add that M. Zola does not laugh heartily. The air is as thick in his novels as on "that Lethean wharf" where all things rot. No one would laugh willingly in a cancer-hospital. Over the debaucheries and horrid confusions of "Nana," "Pot Bouille," and the rest, there does not pass so much as the ripple of a smile. They are dulness incarnate. The author feels it and gives a solid reason for what is a most instructive trait of his composition, in the first chapter of "Nana"—one of the few dramatic scenes he has successfully managed, which recalls, like a bad copy, Flaubert's wonderful art. The "human beast" does not

laugh any more than he sings. He is too full of murderous, or hungry, or unclean appetites, too intensely preoccupied, like a tiger in the jungle, with the means of satisfying them. Laughter means a degree of freedom, and he is never free. What freedom can there be in sensation? It is the spirit glancing from earth to heaven, holding up its mirror of the ideal to things below, and never without a touch of pity—disinterested yet not alien—which reveals in a kindly light the imperfections clinging to the finite, and breaks out into a good-humoured laugh, as though at its own failings. “The gods love a joke,” says Plato. But the less tamed and civilised a beast is, the more seriously it goes about its business, after the first grace of infancy. Those who know modern French literature, and the social atmosphere to which it belongs, will have observed how the sparkle is dying out of both. The working classes, we are told, have begun to load their brains with indifferent beer and vitriolised spirits, instead of the light wine which was their holiday drink. One scents the vitriol in M. Zola’s volumes, ‘*l’odeur du peuple*.’ It is part of the “documentary evidence” offered us in proof of the reality on which he works. The Gallic vivacity which charmed all Europe is changing to a sullen humour, at once cruel and cowardly; it is sinking into “*le terrain fétide et palpitant de la vie*,” which is all that the late M. Claude Bernard and the immoral school of literary vivisectionists can discover by observation or experiment, when they would know the nature of things. This, they assure men like M. Brunetière, who reproach them with not depicting “the tragedy of a will which thinks,” is the only real life—a mechanism you can take to pieces and put together as you please, a mass of grey tissue to be filled with alcohol or chloral, and its action noted, as in a laboratory. But if you evoke the beast, do you not thereby hypnotize the man? In any case, there are two orders of observation. Will it be said that they are of equal human or even of equal scientific value?

However, let us not discuss when we should be telling our story. We now see that Realism sets out with prejudices, no less decided than those of the most fossilised

of its opponents. Its great first principle is the essential bestiality of man, the prevalence of instinct over reason, as something primordial, and, so to speak, the way into Nature's secrets—as the supreme utterance of the mouth of knowledge. But is not this the account we gave of French Romanticism? The wheel has come round to where it started. Victor Hugo's Quasimodo and Triboulet are in the same category with the Muffats and the Coppeaus, while Madame Marneffe and Nana sink into one indistinguishable abomination. Neither Balzac, nor Hugo, nor Flaubert, nor Zola, dreams of bringing on the boards what M. Brunetière requires of them, "the tragedy of a will which thinks." There is no will in their dramas, as we have seen, but only an environment, or a character doomed by its innate qualities to act as it is made to act. With them, the main interest is not in showing how a man, by mastering himself, becomes lord of his fate; but how irresistibly instinct breaks through hindrances, and the prophecy written in nerves and temperament is fulfilled *malgré lui*. The identity of principle cannot be mistaken. It is chiefly the treatment that differs.

Not to enlarge on this point, however, we may suggest a comparison between M. Zola, as representing the "experimental romance" of low life, and the English writers who have dealt with similar themes, from Smollett to Dickens. In the gift of observation, in true pathos, in the interpretation of character, he will appear immeasurably beneath them. And the reason is not far to seek. It is "fellow-feeling" that makes us "wondrous kind." The hard-featured Scottish surgeon had a great liking for his Roderick Randoms and his Humphrey Clinkers. Dickens lived in his creations, and their troubles were his own: he was SMIKE, Copperfield, and even "Jo" of Tom All Alone's. The dangerous quality of stage-sentimentalism, which marred his finest work, could not hide the deep and tender sympathy with all poor friendless creatures, with the outcast, the weak, the vexed and persecuted, with little children, and the very dogs and ravens, to which he owes the unique affection cherished for his memory in English hearts. And he touched these aching wounds of humanity with gentle hands: no stain came

upon him from the degradation which he studied in its lowest haunts. His pictures are most innocent of all that could hurt or offend. M. Zola would have looked in vain for cynical shameless details or polluting language to the great predecessor who knew working men and women better than he had ever done, but whose "documentary evidence" betrays no affection for the foul and the abnormal.

It is worth while insisting that even the author of "L'Assommoir" moves our compassion when he feels the like himself and is not ashamed to let it appear; in the episode of the murdered child Lalie, for example, which will remind his English readers of Charley in "Bleak House," and in the pauses and moments of remorse, not unfaithfully drawn by him, when Coppeau and Gervaise make some effort, though unavailing, to gather up the fragments of their poor lives, shattered to pieces by drink and misery. But, in the main, he is hardly more sympathetic than Flaubert. His study of fallen women in "Nana" remains to an incalculable extent untrue, for the very reason that he allows (like a genuine son of Rabelais) a far greater influence to passion than to poverty in crowding these unhappy beings on the road to ruin. But the statistics, founded on evidence that cannot be disputed, of reformatories, hospitals, and charitable societies, tell another tale. It would be more to the purpose to indict the buyers rather than the sellers in that dismal market. Like Balzac, M. Zola had a keen relish for the disorders of existence, not, of course, as practising them, but imaginatively; and he preferred them full-flavoured and vulgar, "tripes à la mode de Caen," if one may borrow a dish from the *cuisine* of "L'Assommoir." But his recipes for the preparing of such viands were taken from a sort of abstract chemistry, not from experience. "Given," he would seem to say, "the animal called hare, it should be dressed in the manner following." But Mrs. Glasse—to say nothing of Brillat Savarin—would assure him that there are twenty ways of dressing hare. The Paris workman is not simply a type—he is a crowd of distinctly marked individuals; and what we desiderate in the story-teller is a little more observation (not of

the documentary sort) and the sympathy which makes it possible. M. Zola confessed penitently that when he published "*La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*," he was yet under the influence of romantic Idealism. It is perfectly true. And he never quite broke the chain. But that sense of logic which gives to French writing its dramatic squareness and symmetry, as it led French gardeners to cut and hack their woods into straight lines, led him and his disciples to work by formulas, intelligible indeed, but terribly finite. There is no "abysmal depth of personality" in them. Literature is not to be a method of approximations, but scientific and exact to the last fibre. As though a gallery of photographs could exhaust the changes, or tell the history, of a human face! "Go to," one feels tempted to say, "when your painters have rendered to their own satisfaction a square inch of the living form—when the infinite gradation of tints in the human hand or cheek has been transferred to canvas, come and tell us that you have put the soul into words." It is, indeed, "mere imitation of the inimitable." Hints and happy suggestions of passing moments are, within the artist's power. But the method is one of interpretation, founded on surprisingly scanty data. That gift it is which makes the value of experience in art as in science, in the reason of pictured fancies as in the everyday struggle for success. To quote the reverend fable, millions of men see the apple fall and think only whether it is green or ripe,—a Newton sees it, and discovers the system of the universe.

But to return. The nameless horror which clings to M. Zola's description of a world stricken with leprosy, fit only to be shovelled out of sight or passed through a winnowing fire, brings to a certain extent its own cure. Vice and vulgarity in themselves have no charm; the author of "*La Terre*" and "*Germinal*" is compelled to feign a virtue if he have it not, and to assure his audience that a high moral indignation makes him a realist, as it made Juvenal a poet. But the flame of righteous anger is less perceptible in volumes of which public opinion and, we are happy to say, the law in this country forbid the translation to be circulated, than the dull red glare of lust

and obscenity, or the noise and fumes of an atmosphere fit only for Yahoos to dwell in. That the classics of a nation, long held to be the first in Europe for its refinement, should include M. Zola's writings, is a portent of unexampled significance. The licence of the eighteenth century culminated in '89 and '93. In what moral earthquake or *culbute générale* are we to behold the outcome of a literature which is read by hundreds of thousands, and which inflames while it expresses their vilest fancies? Baudelaire has called his poetry of the Decadence *Les Fleurs du Mal*. It is the epigraph of the French literature of our time, the very virtues of which are grafted upon vice. Corruption breeds creatures of one kindred with itself. These dark and poisonous toadstools, growing upon the grave of an illustrious people, bear witness to the life in death which is fast consuming the France that we have known and admired.

For not even M. Zola has touched the floor of this great deep, covered with a vegetation that springs only in darkness. His robust vulgarity has still some strength in it; the wild beasts, tearing one another with bloody jaws, display primeval fierceness that, if it were only tamed, might serve better purposes than to devour and be devoured. The disgust which overcomes us when we read the chronicles of "Les Rougon-Macquart" may possibly mislead. M. Zola had neither languors nor lilies to offer the young and imaginative, except in "Le Rêve," a curious, not altogether unsuccessful resuscitation of the quasi-religious novel. Angélique and Félicien, however, claim but a holiday importance in the movement we are following. Paradoxical as it may sound, we feel that writers like M. Alphonse Daudet, and still more like M. Bourget, represent lower circles of this Inferno than do the absolute Realists.

M. Daudet, a versatile genius with touches of Southern humour and gay lightness, was, for the intrinsic quality of his work, by far the most considerable of French novelists after Flaubert. In the drawing of character, in a certain freedom, and we had almost said largeness of handling, and in the faculty of arousing sympathy with the rival personages which come forward on his stage,

it will hardly be contended that he had a living equal. "Les Rois en Exil" drew from M. Brunetière the observation that its author was "moving towards something new"; that he had perhaps come upon a fresh vein in the country of romance. The drama of character, the shock of passions, had little interest, comparatively, for M. Daudet. He preferred to paint what any one may see if he will drive or walk down the Champs Elysées, or enter a café at the corner of the Rue Royale. But whereas M. Zola, in attempting these effects, showed the want of tone and colour which makes a photograph disappointing, M. Daudet possessed a rare originality, and was not only an artist, said M. Brunetière again, but a poet. The French, perhaps from a feeling of the limits of their language, readily condone the absence of metre in poetry. To them a prose poet seems not inferior to the Muse which floats and soars upon the wings of rhyme. However, let it be granted that M. Daudet had his portion of the poet's gifts. Among them was that of seizing fugitive and elementary impressions,—an aptitude which he developed by the study of Flaubert. Thus, also, he rendered thought by physical sensations, and developed his characters by establishing them where the action itself revealed what was in them.

That he did violence to the language, and stretched it on the rack of his invention, was no less true than symptomatic of the disease into which the nation has fallen. But he had feeling: he knew how to animate the figures which he borrowed from the pavement and the newspaper. He had not read Dickens for nothing; and he was one of the few French novelists who have been sufficiently at home with nature to describe children. The little Prince, Zara, in "Les Rois en Exil," is a pathetic study, with his boyish nobleness of bearing and most pitiful destiny, due to the corrupted royal blood which calls forth words of astonishment from the great physician. Daudet was not afraid to express an interest in the men and women whose story he tells, for he had renounced the "impersonal" art of Flaubert. And his laughter is human and pleasant, as in the "Tartarin," who represents for us the extravagance of the Méridional at ease

With one whom we are warranted in calling genial,—and there is, if the word be rightly taken, no higher praise,—it was to be hoped that a chapter of French literature would begin quite unlike the foul caricatures of reality which were all that M. Zola could produce. “Le Nabab” might be leniently judged as a vehement but by no means unmerited satire on the *dramatis personæ* who flourished under Napoleon III. If “Les Rois en Exil” gave a misleading and even false view of the royal houses of Europe, which are not all sunk in corruption and effeminacy (in spite of the Prince of Axel and Christian II.), there was yet something of an historical breadth in the picture which promised nobly for the man who had conceived and executed so large a design. True, the mere handling of characters like J. Tom Levis and Sophie Leemans had its danger. A Tacitus cannot be too strict with himself or with his audience; for where there is plague there will be infection. And the infection, alas! rages, overflows, and conquers in “Sapho,” a story as unwholesome as “La Cousine Bette.”

No man, for the purpose of instructing his sons “when they arrive at the age of twenty,” had the right to perpetrate such an outrage on public taste. It has been argued that the moral is severe. But most certainly it was not of ignominious stories like these that Terence wrote, “Nosse hæc omnia salus est adolescentulis.” When vice has become (as doubtless on a great scale it always tends to become) a diseased instinct taking the place of human nature and making of men and women mere goats and monkeys, it is imperative that the romance, which above all forms of literature appeals to the multitude, should be silent concerning it. In these ghastly realms, peopled by foul Harpies and the obscene creations which seem to possess like a growing madness the minds of the Parisians, that notable prediction of the English poet has been fulfilled, “Art after art goes out, and all is night.” We cannot criticize such works; for it is absolutely impossible to speak of them in detail. M. Daudet might rest assured that in writing “Sapho,” or any other of its kind, he was pouring into the wounds of humanity not oil and wine, but vitriol. And though his

painters, sculptors, poets and the rest, when they fall into the mire, give vent to lamentations—on the whole maudlin and ineffective—over their degraded imbecility, the moral of his treatment is not so much that slavery to instinct will plunge the whole man in ruin, as that no modern can escape from it. Fate, in the shape of the prevailing corruption, will, it appears, be too strong for him. There is not one just man in this City of the Plain.

A novelist of great experience and renown, M. Octave Feuillet, whose "*Julia de Trécœur*" had long been a masterpiece, but who did not in his old age share the fatalist sentiments of the majority, has denounced them and the principles from which they are derived, in the remarkable story "*La Morte*," published a few years ago. Are we but the creatures of circumstance, with passions seeking their satisfaction in the struggle for life? Then morality, truth, self-sacrifice, are "bugs to frighten children"; and lust and murder but empty names. How can we rebuke in conscience the acts of an organism which is no more at liberty not to act than the wind is to shift of its own accord from east to west, or a stone to fall upwards? On these premisses the heroine takes her stand. She develops a faculty of scientific murder which would have astounded Madame de Brinvilliers, who, very probably, poisoned on no clear principles. And when she is weary of the husband thus acquired, she lays before him the doctrine of "psychological moments" which justifies her in sipping the nectar of various sweets as she wings her way through the Earthly Paradise. M. Feuillet, on the appearance of this trenchant and emphatic protest against the fashionable doctrines, was satirised by his younger contemporaries as retrograde and worn-out. But here, we answer, is M. Paul Bourget, neither retrograde nor worn-out; who possesses the newest methods, and has travelled everywhere. And it is M. Paul Bourget, the Parisian of the present, a cosmopolite, man of the world, philosopher and poet, who has repeated and driven home the teaching of M. Feuillet in novels which sell by the twenty thousand. Not that he is a plagiarist. If "*Un Disciple*" happens to be still more unpleasant than "*La Morte*," it is yet

strikingly original, and as conclusive as the evidence of an independent witness ought to be in any court of law, criminal or literary.

It is an apt saying of M. Tissot, that this latest renowned of French story-tellers brings a "sad and serious mind to the study of the insoluble problems of life"¹—for such M. Tissot reckons them. And he refers to the influence of Baudelaire and of M. Renan, which we may trace in his poems and romances. Like the author of "*Les Paradis Artificiels*," M. Bourget sketches scenes of "debauchery at once venal and pitiless"; he does not shrink from details which to the common taste are revolting (and very justly so); yet he has delicate symphonies in his verse. From a rather unpromising quarter—M. Dumas fils—he has borrowed the "moral preoccupation" which gives a tragic colouring to "*Crime d'Amour*" and "*L'Irréparable*." We may, perhaps, question whether it is a sign of "exquisite aristocracy" in M. Bourget, or in his model M. Ernest Renan, to be "curious yet indifferent" in viewing the realities of life, or whether to "codify one's beliefs" is, in fact, "absolutely vain." But that M. Bourget's works in the period we are considering do not "depend upon a philosophy," that he is only an "artist-amateur"—which must not be taken to mean an amateur artist—that his criticism has been "fragmentary and sentimental," while he has perhaps experienced "two or three divine sensations," will be obvious on turning over his pages. He is, indeed, curious about all things. Yet—if "*Mensonges*" may be relied upon—he has a "marked sympathy" for studies in *la psychologie amoureuse*—an expression for which, we are thankful to say, the English language does not readily yield an equivalent. Shall we call him an Ovid in French prose? His own slightly languid description of himself tells us that he is "a melancholy analyst." For him the dream of art, he says, in the dedication of "*André Cornélis*," would be "an analytic romance founded on the actual data of the science of mind." Always science in these men of to-day! Mr. Herbert Spencer or M. Ribot is to vouch for the accuracy of the phenomena they

¹ Tissot p. 312.

exhibit. By-and-by we shall see the College of Surgeons giving its Imprimatur to Mudie's Catalogues. Alas, alas! and what will have become of our Spensers and Shakespeares, who indulged not only in "two or three divine sensations," but in a thousand, and who ventured to give to a universe of "airy nothings" "a local habitation and a name"? "Airy nothings!" Think of Mr. Spencer or Mr. Grant Allen struggling with these remnants of an exploded poetic faculty! M. de Maupassant was right, then; and a greater than he.¹ For it was Heine who said that Democracy—as he saw it in France—would be the death of Art.

"Sad analysis," which has analysed into the limbo of a "mere psychology" our long-cherished faith in the moral law, and a God that can hear our prayers, will not be very tender with the fair and gracious forms which have haunted the poet's mind and peopled the realms of fancy. M. Bourget was for long so resolved to be a sceptic that he fell into pure dilettantism. Nor is any other conclusion possible to the man who asks in "André Cornélis," "Is there a God—is there good, or evil, or justice?" and who answers that "there is nothing but a pitiless fate which weighs upon the race of man, a fate unjust and absurd, giving out joy and sorrow at haphazard." "I am too deeply fatalist," adds another of his characters, François Vernantes, "to attach any meaning to the word remorse." Are we not reminded, again and again, in such sayings, of M. Feuillet's "La Morte"?

"A combination of sensuality and mysticism," "of extreme refinement with utter weakness," "a modern species of Hamletism"—such are the notes of M. Bourget's admiring critic.² But the sensuality is more obvious than the mysticism in that strangely repulsive book "Mensonges"; the heroine of which spreads round her a miasma which would not be out of place in "Les Parents Pauvres." It records a series of bitter and cruel deceptions for René Vincy,—another of the modern poets whose vanity is their ruin,—but no one could have stooped to write it without harming himself as well as his readers. Let us ask, too, why the crowning scenes

¹ Flaubert à George Sand, p. lviii.

² Tissot, p. 304, etc.

of "L'Irréparable," "Crime d'Amour," and "Un Disciple," are full of physical disgust and brutality? These creatures, as M. Bourget must be well aware, are fit only for a menagerie of lascivious beasts. It is impossible to fall lower. From the hero of "Le Rouge et Le Noir,"—to take a well-known example of the Realist handling,—to the pupil of M. Sixte, who betrays every human trust in his rage for "psychological experiments," there is a change of nature, difficult to express in its full intensity. Julien Sorel, Stendhal's hero, has certain qualities of the soldier kind, a reckless daring and power of self-sacrifice, which we are compelled to admire, and we cannot help pitying him when he lays his head on the block. But was there ever anything so foul and mean as the coward, liar, and assassin, who finds in M. Sixte's "Principles of Psychology"—that is to say, in M. Taine and Mr. Herbert Spencer—the justification of his unspeakable baseness?

It is probable that M. Bourget, who is too æsthetic to display, or perhaps to feel, much sense of humour, did not intend "Un Disciple" for a satire on the masters to whom he bowed down. However, a satire it remains; nor does it escape a touch of comedy in certain otherwise tremendous situations. To say that Robert Greslou is no gentleman is to say very little: he is what the *naïf* American would call "a cur"; and not all his creator's refinement will make him pathetic or even interesting. Did M. Bourget intend him for the *reductio ad absurdum* of determinist theories? Are lying, treachery, and unmanliness the necessary outcome of Mr. Spencer's "Ethics"? And is *l'ivresse animale* the sum total of what our new teachers provide to temper the melancholy and the meanness of their systems? "Ah," exclaims M. Tissot, "pray do not ask: the rosary of M. Bourget's contradictions would be endless." But that writer himself, in the remarkable address to the young men of this generation, which serves as a preface to "Un Disciple," implores them with as much ardour as though he believed in free-will, not to yield to an effeminate philosophy which is no less cruel than obscene. The universal solvent, scepticism, which threatens in so many quarters to dissipate fixed beliefs and even objective laws, reducing metaphysics (and one must

include Spinoza and Kant among metaphysicians) to a process of "soul-making," has inundated M. Bourget with its acrid floods. He feels "the sadness of an existence which is ever beginning anew," but which achieves no forward step. To him "life is a riddle with contradictory answers, all possible and all inadequate." He is a flagrant Pessimist, homesick with a longing for the Hereafter in which he puts no confidence. Though he enters into the sufferings of the multitude, and is softly compassionate like a Tolstoy or a Turgenieff, he looks for no brighter day when mankind will have cast away some of their burdens. If Armand de Querne forsakes his unbelief in the last chapter of "Crime d'Amour," it does not follow that M. Bourget had then seen its falsehood. At times, in reading him, one lets the book fall to wonder if Amiel would not have written so, had nature given him the pen of the story-teller. And since these words first saw the light M. Bourget has undergone a change that some describe as conversion; while M. Léon Daudet, in spite or because of his reading in "Sapho," has become a fervent Catholic who abhors the Revolution.

Realism — Pessimism; Pessimism — Realism: the pendulum swings to and fro, always describing the same hopeless curve, in this literature of an exhausted race. Only the most unwholesome metaphors, derived from asylum or hospital, will convey an adequate sense of the impression made, as by the vulgarity of M. Zola, so by the nerveless refinement and deep melancholy in which the soul of M. Bourget takes delight. Nor is he alone in his conviction that the world, as Littré said, is "a very inferior planet"—is, to speak out the truth wrapped up in our social impostures, the worst of all possible worlds, a system of cruel unreason. The exquisite writer who calls himself Pierre Loti is never tired of taking up his parable to the same effect. That feeling for the beauty of landscape, of skies and seas, and the wide world out of doors, which seems at last to be awakening in French poets and romancists, giving the language a charm it never had before, is combined in the author of "Pêcheurs d'Islande" with a sadness relieved by no gleam of a larger hope. The terror and loveliness; the grey mists of the

North, or the intense tropical lights which make the heavens a blinding vision; the lonely sands and salt weeds of the Breton coast; the wasted Arctic sun, pale as any moon, where it hangs on the edge of the horizon; the phantom waters dotted over with visionary sails,—such as these are, in Pierre Loti's significant language, "the eternal things," visible, steadfast, not to be interpreted. They are always there. And from age to age man is consumed in their presence. Has this sailor-poet read Pascal? Hardly. Yet he might have chosen for the motto of his half-sad, half-sensuous romances, those well-known words: "*Le dernier acte est toujours sanglant, quelque belle que soit la comédie en tout le reste. On jette enfin de la terre sur la tête, et en voilà pour jamais.*"¹

Did, then, the lives of Gaud and Yann, of the tender-hearted old grandmother Yvonne, and the rest of them, signify so little, that whether they suffered or rejoiced was all one to the deaf and blind nature of things? Is the last idol that men worship the Supreme Indifference? So judged Spinoza, so repeat after him the sect of the Unknowable, to whom it appears beyond belief that the heart of man should divine by its deepest emotions what is at the heart of Nature. A little moment of promise and passion, great fears, irremediable losses;—and then, the sea swallows down what the earth has brought forth. Seed-time and harvest return, return for ever; but there is no garner of life. Endless generations, no immortality. The spiritual creed, relying on which men have dared and done noble things for thousands of years, has at length, these writers tell us, been shattered, dissolved, explained away, by science running out into nescience, like a stream losing itself in mid Atlantic. The veil of Maya being lifted shows us, in Amiel's astonishing phrase, "the illusion of the mighty Death." For all alike is illusion, death as well as life, good and evil, pleasure and pain, love, righteousness, remorse, penitence, and beyond all other things, hope. "*En voilà pour jamais.*"

What are we to think, now the procession has gone

¹ "*Pensées*," p. 207, ed. 1670.

by, with its music and its banners, a thousand fantastic figures, in sable and scarlet, the carnival of Paris or of France, representing, as we said, the life of a nation? Here are the prophets, apostles, martyrs of the new time, each bearing his illuminated scroll, written within and without, professing to have the secret hidden from the beginning, and to publish it gratis. Are we justified in asserting a family likeness between them all? Is Rousseau their father, be they Realists or Romanticists? or would he disown them as impostors?

The question must be decided by evidence such as we have brought forward. Rousseau was a compound of "mysticism and sensuality"; no law was sacred to him but the gratification of instinct. He grafted every virtue upon a vice. He treated adultery as one of the fine arts, and abounded in theatrical sentiment while forwarding his children to the Foundling Hospital, duly as they arrived. He was full of a mad vanity which could brook no interference, and drove him into solitude where he devoured his own heart. He had cruel as well as cynical instincts, which men like Couthon and Robespierre inherited. He was vulgar, obscene, furious; all sentiment and sensation, upon which he founded a malignant logic subversive of human institutions,—or if mechanically constructive, never yet equal to organic creation. In his view, society was one monstrous pile of falsehood. He would have laid the axe to the root and brought it down, as the generation in fact did which followed his guidance. He was of a despairing temperament, defended suicide, lived at the mercy of impulse, and at last, as was thought, committed the supreme act of cowardice involved in self-destruction. If we enlarge this picture till it becomes a national autobiography, shall we not see in it the literary, artistic, and philosophical France which the novelists have drawn? It appears so to us. Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Zola, Bourget, Pierre Loti, Daudet, greatly as they differ in character and style, do yet agree in the great resemblance. Negatively, they are not controlled by that reason which discerns the laws of life, morality, and the Divine Presence in the world. Positively, they write under the pressure of

passion and instinct. The man they delineate is not a being of large discourse looking before and after; he is *la bête humaine*.

Let us draw the conclusion. Those who cannot regard history in the light of an old almanack, who judge that the future will be governed by the laws which have moulded the past, will be reminded, as this long procession moves off the stage, of certain words written by Lord Chesterfield on Christmas Day, 1753, when the Revolution was only murmuring like distant thunder: "All the symptoms," he observed, "which I have ever met with in history, previous to great changes and revolutions in government, now exist and daily increase in France." But "revolution" is not the word which falls from French lips in our time. There is something beyond revolution; and the Renans, Bourgetts, and Daudets are not slow to pronounce it—the word "decadence." A putrescent civilisation, a corruption of high and low, a cynical shamelessness meet us at every turn, from the photographs which insult modesty in the shop windows on the Boulevards, and the pornographic literature on the bookstalls, to the multiplication of divorces and the "drama of adultery" accepted as a social ordinance. What difference of view is there between "Jacques" and "Un Disciple," save that George Sand was a sentimental artist and M. Bourget is a student of psychology? What between "Sapho" and "Les Parents Pauvres," or between "La Terre" and "Les Paysans"? And is not Flaubert's disdain of Emma Bovary surpassed by his still deeper disdain of himself? The civilising bond of the moral law has burst asunder in France; the whole beast-nature it kept in check is stripping itself of the last shreds of decency, that it may go about naked and not ashamed. "All has ended in the mire, in the abyss of the eternal nothingness," cries the hero of "Le Mariage de Loti." The literature of a nation possessed with that belief has become either a Psalm of Death, or, as M. Renan proves in "L'Abbesse de Jouarre," a wild outburst of Epicurean sensuality. With Leopardi it exclaims, "Omai per l'ultima volta dispera," or with Baudelaire,

Resigne-toi, mon cœur; dors ton sommeil de brute.

The question is whether we are witnessing, not the "tragedy of a will which thinks," exemplified in the rejuvenescence of a great nation struggling against adversity, but something at once hideous and beyond all description pitiable, the comedy of *delirium tremens*, of foul dreams and spasmodic efforts, with which M. Zola assists his hero to die in "L'Assommoir." These are not merely symptoms of revolution; they are prognostics of an intellectual and moral suicide. If we would find a parallel to modern French literature we must go back to Martial and Petronius. But when Martial and Petronius wrote, society was sinking down into its ashes like a spent fire, suffocating in the stench of its own abominations. M. Zola has shown us the barbarians ready to break out from the "Ventre de Paris." And in "Sapho," "Les Rois en Exil," "Un Disciple," "La Morte," and the rest, we learn the temper and the moral resources of that governing part of France which will be called upon to withstand, or to civilise them. M. Richepin, moreover, has vehemently declared in "Les Blasphèmes," that so long as science, art, or principle is believed in, the old superstition which he calls Theism and Christianity will return. We may invert the reasoning and assert that, when Christianity has been cast out, science, art, and principle will follow it. For man to "sleep the sleep of the brute," means not only the decadence, but the end of a civilisation.

VIII

PIERRE LOTI¹

THAT high master of modern French, Flaubert, has warned us against every work of art in which the author's face seems to be reflected—"toute œuvre est condamnable," he says, "où l'auteur se laisse deviner." Such egotism, he thinks, is unworthy of a supreme artist, and bears its condemnation in itself. Doubtless, Flaubert had in view, as models for all time, the anonymous classics, such as the "Iliad" or the "Odyssey," whose writer (if written they ever were) has passed into the realm of shadows, and was but the spokesman of a period in which his own thoughts and feelings signified very little. The sacred songs and epics from old Greek times, and the earliest of the tragedies, are in a high degree impersonal; the mask is everything, the actor nothing. And there is room for such a public and, so to call it, objective literature still. But to deny or disdain the other source of inspiration, which we may term lyric, or romantic, or biographical, according to the forms it has taken, implies an extraordinary forgetfulness in so well read a man as Flaubert.

Are not Shakespeare's "Sonnets" intensely personal in form and feeling? Shall we deny to St. Augustine's "Confessions," or to Rousseau's, the quality of art? Is "Werther" such a composition that from no line of it may we discern the author's cast of temperament? And will not those who have studied their "Madame Bovary"

¹ "Pêcheurs d'Islande." 109th edition. By Pierre Loti: Paris, 1892. "Le Mariage de Loti." 47th edition, 1893. "Aziyadé." 21st edition, 1892. "Fantôme d'Orient." 35th edition, 1892. "Au Maroc." 25th edition, 1893. "Le Roman d'un Enfant." 38th edition, 1892. "Le Roman d'un Spahi." 33rd edition, 1892. "Japoneries d'Automne." 26th edition, 1892. "Mon Frère Yves." 52nd edition, 1892. And other works.

be capable of giving a shrewd guess or two as regards the make and principles of its very astonishing creator? Science, in short, may be impersonal, but literature is only so, for the most part, by reason of our ignorance or want of insight. And the question at no time is simply whether we are reading fiction, autobiography, or history, but whether what we read is a page from Nature drawn out in apt human language according to the laws of truth and beauty. The artist may paint his own portrait as well as another's, provided he follow the lines of art; and though self-portraiture cannot be easy, we all know how interesting it is.

Two striking examples of such portraiture, in more than one point akin, have been added since 1884 to that French gallery of men of renown which all the world is in the habit of visiting,—we mean Henri-Frédéric Amiel of Geneva, dealt with by us in an earlier page, and the Academician who is known by the name of Pierre Loti. What would Flaubert have said of the “*Journal Intime*” of the one, and the biography draped in fiction, extending through some dozen volumes, of the other? Take away the personal element, the confidences made to every passer-by, and how much of them would be left? Amiel spent thousands of pages in dissecting his own moods, keeping a record of the intermittent pulse which beat so feverishly day and night, nor would suffer him to escape from torture. And Loti, when a mere boy, began the diary of fugitive impressions, of landscapes seen in various lights, and of the emotions which they never failed to evoke, that has grown into a sailor's log-book, crammed with pictures of East and West—a kaleidoscopic prose-poem, not utterly unlike “*Childe Harold*,” with the one figure always on deck, his thoughts consuming him until he has found relief in crying them aloud, sparing not his hearers nor yet himself.

There is something a little ironical in the notion of a man whose reserve has been most marked, and who suddenly flings his sibylline leaves upon all the pathways, striking a bargain for so many volumes octavo with M. Calmann Lévy in the Rue Auber. But the like has happened again and again. And the public, which is the

greatest gossip that ever talked scandal, loves to have it so, in spite of Flaubert and his haughty reticence. M. Pierre Loti is now one of the Immortals, with leave to write every detail about himself, and his voyages, and his sailor-friends, and his pet animals—whatever he pleases, grave or gay, serious or trifling—assured that thousands will read, and that their tears, their smiles, their sympathy, will not be wanting. All this, beyond question, Amiel too might have enjoyed in his lifetime, if his courage had been equal to his introspection. But he did not dare to face the public; and the most curious of modern diaries—not excepting those ambiguous pages of Marie Baschkirtseff which have been lately discussed—was rescued from a dead man's hand. Shall we term M. Loti more fortunate? His work is not yet done; and there is such peril in a self-exhibition of the kind, that perhaps here too we had better take Solon's advice, and proclaim no writer happy until M. Calmann Lévy has seen the last of him.

But as one of the lonely artists, who belong to no school, and, while they scorn rather than cultivate literature, have given to the world books which are more than books, with a life in them, and a savour, and a charm as distinct as it is impossible to counterfeit, this French officer of marines will repay our attention. We must, indeed, submit to his terms, which are somewhat stringent. He is not the ordinary Parisian story-teller, brilliant yet commonplace, artificial and exhausted, moving inside the narrowest of horizons, convinced that the Sahara begins within a mile of Fontainebleau. For M. Loti, Paris can hardly be said to exist. That is amazing; but even more so is the difference of method or of aim, which marks him off from his brethren of the feuilleton and the vaudeville. He writes no novels of society; the tales which he has to tell are as simple as a child's; and when, the other day, his "*Pêcheurs d'Islande*" was brought on the stage at the Grand Théâtre, the result confounded his admirers and disappointed the audience. A more exquisite or touching story has not been printed since "*François le Champi*"; but its peculiar charm could never, while the conventions of the stage are what we

know, be given by actors and scene-painting. From eloquence it studiously refrains; it has neither dramatic situations nor a dialogue sparkling with the epigrams dear to French sentiment; among the "Fleurs du Mal" which spring up so abundantly before the Paris footlights, this mere lily of the field seemed to have no glory worth speaking of. It was not created to bring down the house, or to run for three hundred nights.

And such as is the passionate silent tragedy of Yann and Gaud, of Yvonne and Sylvestre, even such, in varying degree, are the rest of M. Loti's volumes. Narratives we cannot call them, but pages torn from life, with no little of the pain and the blood in them still that betray their origin. The art of transitions, the skill which completes a story from given outlines, the dénouement so long a tradition, have yielded in this instance to a manner at once thoughtful and careless, intent on a bold stroke here and there, but leaving much to be guessed, and not a little for the reader's interpretation. Thus far M. Loti is an Impressionist, one that speaks to his experience, but would prefer not to be at the same time judge or jury. The essence of his description is its fragmentary truth; where vision fails him, he loses his voice. He is all moods and colours; and like the most unconscious of artists, when he endeavours to think, he can but reproduce his emotions. Surely we may call this the lyrical temperament in its least complex form, and the very opposite of what Flaubert has insisted upon. It is the height of pathos, indeed; but, if we may borrow another term from the Greeks, there is in it not a grain of ethos, of character or judgment, concerning itself with the moral which might have been disengaged from these stories.

Or if a moral there be, it does not in the least resemble that of the great French classics, nor is it in keeping with the gay and daring tone of the old language. We have been accustomed to think of our Gallic neighbours as a nation given to wit and laughter, keenly alive to the ridiculous side of things, light-hearted, jovial, and only too ready, like M. Renan, to settle all difficulties with a smile. It was the Englishman who took his pleasure sadly, and thought of halters and hemlock juice in foggy

November. But M. Loti, in spite of an occasional ripple across his pages, looks at us out of melancholy eyes, and opens his mouth chiefly in order to sigh. He abounds in the finest imagery, yet calls it again and again "an intuition of sad splendour"; the gloom in which he dwells, as though it were native to him, will remind the English reader, both in its depth and its intensity, of De Quincey's opium-dreams. What is the explanation? His serious temper darkens only too often into a Pessimism which Amiel could not more than match. And in the fact that both were bred up as Huguenots, M. Renan would have found the evil root of which they have eaten. Himself a radiant sceptic, never much drawn to the doctrine of original sin as likely to throw light upon the problems of existence, he has remarked that "*le Protestant le plus libre*"—he means the most free-thinking—"garde souvent quelque chose de triste, un fond d'austérité intellectuelle analogue au pessimisme slave."

It would be curious to follow up this consideration, which has its value, by tracing at length the influence of Calvin, at once the type as well as the father of Huguenots, in the literature of the last two centuries, from Rousseau, the sentimental savage, to Carlyle, the cynic with a tender heart; or from William Law and John Henry Newman to Amiel, whom we have defined as the "apostle of Nirvana," and on to Loti, who, from this point of view, will deserve to be known as its artist. But French Huguenot training has a dryness of its own, such as we apprehend in Guizot, and do not altogether escape even in the gentle Adolph Monod and his Pietist circle. It seems, unlike the Scotch, fatal to humour; its victims or votaries would probably have reckoned the sallies of wit in Voltaire as his least pardonable sin. On the other hand, its tendency to a philosophic nescience, with which we are now chiefly concerned, becomes visible in men like Edmond Scherer, and is the true account both of Loti and Amiel. In the famous "*Journal Intime*" we may study its ravages day by day, almost hour by hour; while the "*Roman d'un Enfant*," of which we are going to speak, brings it to the surface even more unmistakably, by reason of the naïve strokes which tell us that this child

of genius was not a metaphysical thinker, but open-eyed in the presence of the world around him.

“Biography draped in fiction”—often very slightly draped—is the account we have given of M. Loti’s stories. It is well known that his musical Polynesian name, signifying a flower, is not the author’s own, but a reminiscence of Tahiti, “the delicious isle,” where he spent many months, and of which he has sketched an outline in most delicate and dreamy colours, with a love tale for the heart of it. Pierre Loti is, in the language of mortals, M. Viaud, a native of Saintonges, in the same neighbourhood as Rochefort and La Rochelle, and of the purest Huguenot descent. One would be glad to hear that he was a kinsman of that poor Théophile de Viau, who wrote some of the most charming pastoral poetry during the reign of Louis XIII., and suffered grievous things at the hands of Père Voisin and Père Garasse. At all events, our M. Viaud had cousins in the Cévennes as well as three old Huguenot aunts in the Isle of Oléron, so that he was likely to be told many heart-stirring legends of persecuted “pasteurs” and the pious dragonnades of Louis XIV. Like so many others who have forsaken Calvin in their riper years, he was brought up with scrupulous severity; his home, though full of tender recollections to him, might have been the “temple” itself, in the bareness and purity of its whitewashed rectitude. Nothing can be more suggestive than to compare the early memories of men of genius reared under an identical system in parts of Europe widely sundered: think, for instance, of Lessing in his Saxon home at Kamentz, Carlyle at Ecclefechan, and this Loti in Saintonges. It is, in a surprising degree, one and the same atmosphere,—a discipline of the sternest in all that regards conduct; detachment utter and complete from the vanities of recreation, literature, and even religious art; with the Oriental landscapes of the Bible to furnish what Loti has called a “sombre and sweet” imagery to the growing boy, and the Bible heroes for a standard of emulation. Naturally, too, these children who were to be famous men chose, as the noblest calling within their reach, that of the ministry. And a great deal of the revolution and

the tragedy which we associate with modern thought, has arisen out of the circumstances under which those who were once destined to "wag their pow in a pu'pit," as the Scotch used to say, have wandered off to join the "Church of Literature," and broken with their family traditions.

M. Loti has found much comfort, and gained a multitude of friends, by recording, with a simplicity which betokens the utmost power of introspection and no little skill in word-painting, the story—he is justified in calling it a romance—of his childhood, with its "beams of sudden brightness," its trembling fears, its "furtive apprehensions of all sorts of infinitudes," and keenest instincts of love and pity. We must not yield to the temptation, pleasant as it would be, of comparing this new chapter of autobiography with those which have made the round of the world; although, certainly, the readers of Goethe and Rousseau and George Sand, of "Aurora Leigh" and "Sartor Resartus," will make their silent reflections, as they turn over these choice and curious pages, with more profit than others who have not glanced the same way. Nor shall we grudge the students of psychology this addition to their treasures on which they have greedily fastened. It is the privilege of genius to have "long long thoughts," a dramatic memory of its own pleasures and sufferings, and a world of imagination in which to rule from the moment it can exercise its mental faculties. As for the class whom we have called lonely artists, their business seems ever to have been, not with things done, but with things felt; their experience signifies, exactly in the spirit which dictated Flaubert's greatest work, that such were the feelings aroused in them, on occasion of events whose measure they did not take upon any outward scale. And thus, in subjective literature, all depends on the reaction within, nothing whatever on the importance of the things in themselves. Cowper's life, for instance (*ecce iterum Calvinus*), or Obermann's, was a chronicle of passion; as a history, you might crumple it in your hand. The "cruel common sense" of an understanding such as Boileau rejoiced in would have made nothing of it. So the "Roman d'un

Enfant" turns upon momentary flashes of intuition, on fits of loneliness or longing, on the evocation of complex and lasting images in response to a word, a colour, the rosy flame of branches in a blaze, or on the child's vague sense of fear when night is fallen. His whole existence is a "charmed anxiety in the presence of nature."

These efforts to reproduce past sensations seem like importing the methods of science into literature, and are characteristic of Realism in our day; but whether, and to what extent they should be suffered, is an abstruse question. Too often they take their rise in "the play of downcast thoughts," for which there is no safety-valve in action. The result, when they succeed, is at once faithful and dreamlike; we see what is really not there. And to much in Loti's volumes might be applied his own description of their contents, "a dream that melts, a smoke that flies off, an impalpable nothing," which yet *is* somehow, and only just out of our grasp. The "dead pages," covered with dust—which are all he can offer, as he too modestly remarks, by way of rendering what he saw and felt in childhood—vex him because memory shows how pale they look, and ineffective in its gleam. All this will recall to Amiel's friends his persevering endeavour to fix in his "Journal" the multitude of vanishing impressions, to go down by some process of transformation into the "deeps beyond all soundings," where life is creative and unconscious. "A morbid self-torture," the physician, and perhaps the moralist, will say. But in Loti we find many touches that are pretty and delightful, not at all morbid,—the childlike fetishism of early things, from the sun-stained garden-wall and the dark-green sea, which, when he saw it for the first time, seemed to rise up on all sides, "moving everywhere with a threatening motion," to the exotic savour of the house next door, which is redolent of spices and scents from the Antilles. It is an awakening world, the associations of which were by-and-by to determine his vocation.

The solitary boy, who worships his mother with a French devotion, and hates school, and gets Aunt Claire to do his lessons for him, and "does not want to grow up," and makes friends of birds and beasts, and hunts after

butterflies, who cannot write a theme or a description,—much less a story,—but keeps in secret the diary of his own thoughts, and is looked upon by the other fellows in his class as “odd and uppish” (*bizarre et poseur*), while he torments himself with religious scruples, borrows his fancies from the Apocalypse, feels the melancholy of sunset, however beautiful, and thinks he should like to be the *pasteur* of a lonely parish where he might renew the saintly marvels of les Cévennes, had already in his composition everything to which Pierre Loti is indebted for his success in literature. He had but to print himself at length in a volume, expressing with the utmost force and distinction his individual traits, and fame was sure to follow. And what can teach us so clearly the narrow limits and modest possibilities of that school “education” on which enlightened persons are laying more and more stress every day, as to read in a fresh instance how impotent is “nurture” in the strife with “nature”?—since it was really his well-meaning masters (nicknamed “the Bull Apis” and “the Great Black Monkey”) that disgusted Loti with learning for good and all. So too, if he is not mistaken, he attended service in the “temple” with the most unhappy consequences. As long as he might frame his own visions while reading the Bible, and could taste the sweetness of the quiet evening prayer at home, his thoughts were Christian. But when he went to church it seemed to him that preacher and congregation were given over to dullness and hollow forms.

To these Puritans of a later growth he preferred his old uncle’s grey parrot from Gaboon, which talked (and probably swore) in some negro dialect. But even on this side, when he was begging specimens of tropical butterflies and shells, and wondering at amulets brought from afar, his interest was not in labels, and glass-cases, and museums. Science on week-days attracted him as little as theology did in the Sabbath sermons; what he longed to reach were the live things,—nature terrifying with its thousand faces, and the unknown world of forests, seas, and the burning sun. So now he would be a missionary; but in a little while that fancy came to an end like the rest, for there grew up in him (again we think of Amiel)

“la conscience de la vanité des prières, et du neant de tout.” Yet this mighty “all which was nothing” drew him on like a mirage; the vision of many lands and waters haunted him as truly as it ever did Wordsworth or Turner; his life during thirty years has been simply a journey across the “changing panorama of the world.” But he is not the missionary he meant to be; he is only an artist of Nirvana, whose destiny was fixed one day when he came upon a log-book of the beginning of the century, and read in it how there was sunshine in the South Pacific and a “beautiful sea” on a long past June afternoon. Like Lydgate in “Middlemarch,” he found, by what many would have called the merest accident, among the lumber of an old bookstand, one Thursday evening at La Limoise, —the country house to which he was fond of going,—the guidance no master or sermon could give him. The romance of his childhood ends, not without some slight dramatic touch, when he sends off his letter, as a boy of fourteen, begging his brother to ask an entrance for him into the Naval School.

We have suffered M. Loti to speak for himself, culling from his strange bouquet of recollections a flower here and there which may serve to indicate their colour and fragrance. All along it must be evident that we are dealing with a personality which would be marked even among Englishmen, how much more in a country so disdainful of the eccentric and the original as France has ever been! The isolation of his childhood, combined with that “narrowness of the sect” which has a certain advantage from its depth and fervour of feeling, was by no means unfavourable to his genius; but who shall trace out the cross lines of affinity and heredity which gave him so astonishing a sense of landscape, and the power to fix the moods that came upon him, as though in them alone he held the key to Nature’s wonders? It is worth remarking that M. Loti prides himself on never having written a verse in his life. French verse of course he means, which, pretty or stately as it may often be, has no compass to exhaust the gamut of human emotions. But still, a French boy who has never composed an alexandrine is as distinguished as Lord Castlereagh in his black coat

at the Congress of Vienna, and betrays a rare self-control. Yet more significant was it in a lad of fourteen to be dreaming of the islands in the Pacific, when his companions were burning to tread the Boulevards and achieve Parisian greatness. The French naval *officier* has neither to attract nor reward him the eagles that flew with Napoleon from steeple to steeple until they alighted on Notre Dame. The names of his great admirals are shrouded in the smoke of defeat, and all their courage has but served as a foil to British glory,—a reflection which need not be wanting in pathos, now that the long roll of sea fights is closed and the captured flags are mouldering above the tombs of those who seized them. The boy had, indeed, kinsmen in the navy, and many things at home were associated in his mind from the earliest with the sea and those who do business in the great waters. Nevertheless, he put aside the thought of the ministry, and followed his desire, by a clear choice. When he entered the Naval School he was already an artist who, under English training, would have grown to be a great captain and explorer.

A master of style, looking down superbly on literature, and signalling his entrance among the Forty by assuring them that he never reads; a confirmed pessimist, who flings in the face of Republicans and Utopians Leopardi's doctrine, "*l'infinita vanità del tutto*"; a French romance writer, whose tone is that of self-respect and propriety, even when the story he is telling would not always gain the *prix Montyon*,—such is M. Loti, and it would be hard to find his equal in the ranks which he adorns. From the great tradition of letters in his own country the lack of reading has happily delivered him, for it is a chain, though a golden one; and his independence of spirit sets him in a striking light when compared with men like Victor Hugo, adepts in the art or craft—as ignoble, surely, as place-hunter has ever practised—of couching adulation in lofty rhyme. But one poet there is, indeed, whom he admires and a little resembles,—the Byron of France, Alfred de Musset.

This Puritan had, in his early years, read in secret, with pleasure and remorse, some of De Musset's stanzas;

and although we should allow, with Théophile Gautier, that if Lord Byron was the founder of the Satanic school, not much of the cloven foot is discernible in his volatile and pensive imitator, still it is to him that we owe the Byronic flavour in M. Loti's first volumes: a flavour which does not tickle the modern palate, and, as the author confesses by-and-by with engaging frankness, was a good deal more conventional than he had once imagined. The leading character in these works is an impossible English lieutenant of Marines, named Harry Grant, *alias* Loti. His friend, whom he miscalls Plumket, is described as a philosopher and very tiresome, nor do we feel any regret when Plumket disappears from the stage. Perhaps the only work of the master which leaves a thoroughly disagreeable impression, as at once pretentious and ineffective, is "*Fleurs d'Ennui*," in which the cynical friend is constantly interposing with declamation and satire. As for Harry Grant, he is nothing but a French boy, just escaped out of school, who writes to his Evangelical sister in Yorkshire with fervid eloquence and an amusing want of reserve, which in him is natural, but in a genuine English sailor could simply not exist. All this, however, and the playing at Byron, we must look upon as a mere exercitation in literature,—due, as is clear, to M. Loti's neglect of the cardinal principle laid down by Mr. Matthew Arnold, to make oneself acquainted with the best that has been said and written in the world before proceeding to add to it. We should certainly not have read "*Le Mariage de Loti*," for its picture of a young Englishman; and in "*Aziyadé*" we put aside the reminiscences of "*Childe Harold*" with a feeling of vexation. But, in the midst of stage trappings and the gorgeous make-believe of these earlier stories, we cannot fail to remark an originality, as well as a piercing tone of sadness, which owe nothing to books and possess an indescribable charm.

Loti's elder brother had gone on a voyage round the world, and sent home brilliant descriptions of the tropics. To him may be assigned the chief personal influence that made Loti a lover of the sea, and overcame his intense devotion to the home life, recurring in all his works like

a fundamental harmony. But, above all, Tahiti had furnished his brother's pen with its magic. There, indeed, putting in practice the philosophy of "Locksley Hall," he had—shall we say married?—a Polynesian damsel named Taimaha, and left her to rear his "dusky brood" alone, which she did with the nonchalance of a Maori to whom the communism of the family is no new thing. The young man himself died on board ship, and found a grave in the waters of the Indian Ocean; but his hut of leaves and branches on the island of Moorea was still standing when Loti arrived in Tahiti, some ten years later.

Our hero had once dreamt of joining the missionary band which has scattered the Bible broadcast over these isles of Eden; but "*Le Mariage de Loti*," though a picturesque and not very dangerous volume, recalling, in an odd way, the innocent freshness of "*Paul et Virginie*," would excite consternation in a Sunday school, and perhaps lessen the flow of subscriptions to societies for the conversion of the heathen. It is the first of a series, rare and exquisite in style, in subject novel, and to French readers, one should hope, a pleasant change from the everlasting comedy of intrigue and fashion, which threatens to stereotype their romance and clip the wings of aspiring genius. The unrivalled charm of Tahiti, with its thick and waving woods, its immense calm amid the ocean solitudes, its touch of the supernatural and the haunted, its atmosphere so favourable to contemplation or dreamy indolence, and its savage and simple inhabitants, wearing their garlands of flowers like the most classical of Arcadians,—all this to Englishmen, though untravelled, is an old story; but to the stay-at-home French it must be as new as it is captivating. The beauty of the scene is a grace beyond words—an earthly Paradise spread out upon some golden background where the sunlight is clear and still. But Loti has no intention of showing us the empty garden, however fair; and in the girl Rarahu we catch a glimpse of primitive nature, gentle, wild, and affectionate, though incapable of taking to itself our solemn notions of right and wrong. She is all instinct and superstition, as touching as a child in distress and hardly

more responsible. For the tree of knowledge of good and evil has been planted late in the South Pacific islands; and, while it grows apace, it is bringing forth unexpected fruits, some with the savour of death in them.

Nothing could be simpler than the story of Rarahu. She is pretty, uncivilised, and sixteen, when she meets the English sailor Loti and becomes his wife, "*à la mode de Polynésie*"—that is to say, until he goes on his next voyage. They live mostly in the woods, where all they require is a hut of leaves, a bread-fruit tree, and a running stream. Occasionally they visit the court of Queen Pomaré IV., a benevolent old lady with the teeth of a cannibal and the frank manners of a Guardsman who has seen the world. Dancing, poetry, love-making, and a child's quarrel, with much roaming through the forests, and endless reverie, fill up their time. And when Loti is away Rarahu sends him letters of her own composition in excellent Maori, which are the charm of the book, as graceful as they are tender, with a musical rhythm and a balance of phrases that take us far into the past, and set us dreaming of the old-world measures preserved by the Hebrews and the Arabs, now very sacred in their associations. M. Loti displays much cunning, here and elsewhere, in his employment of the native dialects, with which his sea-voyages have made him familiar. He writes Polynesian, Japanese, and the negro language of Senegal—to say nothing of Turkish or Arabic—with a courage that, as we hope, is born of understanding. For that we must rely on his good nature: he might palm off on us the basest of Australian jargons for classic Tahitian, and we should be little the wiser; although we feel bound to observe that his Polynesian reads very well, and seems to be all of a piece.

But he has contrived to interest us in the colour of the language; he teaches us to feel the beauty there is in its very imperfection, without playing the pedant, or spoiling the quaint and unstudied talk of these children of Nature. The words seem to make one music with the night winds crooning over the island as it lies buried in sleep, with the foam that breaks on its reefs of coral in a low deep murmur. They have the scent of flowers in

them, as well as the strange solemnity of the darkness, the solitude, and the terrified ignorance which encompass the savage life on every side. Rarahu weaves her songs out of trouble or joy as it springs up; she follows the lead of an inspiration which, in our too-civilised existence, we should be willing to buy at a great price. But she is only a timid little creature, with no understanding save through her affection; and when Loti is called away, she falls homesick and quite forlorn, as a dog would be that had lost his master. She writes to him like a child, "The flower of the arum was pretty, but the flower is faded." Of course, he cannot come back. So many have promised that they would, says old Queen Pomaré to the young man sadly, when he is taking his leave; none have ever kept their promise. Rarahu beseeches him, with all manner of antique and touching expressions, not to forget her; but he is gone irrevocably, and she dies.

She dies, but not until the savage life has caught hold of her again, with its added European degradation;—Rarahu is a flower that the careless passer-by has plucked to let it fall in the mire. He need not have plucked it! Loti seems never to have made that reflection, although, when he is told of her death at some noisy dinner-table in La Valetta, he feels cut to the heart, and all her naïve beauty and her poor harmless attachment to him revive with a poignancy which he dares not trust himself to express. Then the question flashes, or rather flames upon us, which all this while the book has been asking, whether a Loti whose manliness had equalled the dumb and doglike love of Rarahu, could not, nay, whether he ought not, to have saved her from such a fate—recognising in her the beautiful human spirit that would match his own? If he had sought affection, not mere pastime, and for her sake renounced his people? It was too hard a duty, perhaps, for one who followed only pleasure; and then, as he argues to himself, how, if he were to stay, would it have been possible to bridge over the gulf between his mind and hers?

The problem is one which seems to have for M. Loti inexhaustible fascination. He does not care to unravel the sentiments of Parisian heroines who are never what

they seem ; but Rarahu, Aziyadé, and Fatou-gaye—figures most unlike their European sisters—are described by him in tones of pity or tenderness, the more striking that, as is clear, the story-teller thinks there was no way but to sacrifice them, if the man whom they attracted was not to lose the noblest of his manhood. And here the simple romance which appeals to human nature, in whatever language it is told, has a significance, and even a greatness, which give it an unusual depth of meaning.

We turn, for instance, “as by the stroke of an enchanter’s wand,” from Tahiti to Constantinople. The first story moving on this grandest of all stages in M. Loti is “Aziyadé,” the second “Fantôme d’Orient,” and there is a space of ten years between them. But they make a single narrative, disguised and drawn to an imaginary conclusion in the first of these sketches, afterwards set down as it really happened. The wandering sailor has now become Arif Effendi, a Musulman for the nonce, with abundance of shawls and scarves and the rest of the *mise en scène* required to make him up according to rule. Behind all this frippery there is much love and suffering, with two or three of the most natural characters in the world—Samuel the Jew, Achmet the loyal Armenian, Cadija the negress—and, above all, Aziyadé herself, the Circassian slave-wife, who has been captured, and sold, and married against her will to old Ab-Eddin Effendi, and who knows nothing of any law which would forbid her to listen when Arif speaks. Very rare must be the volumes in which Stamboul and its wonderful mixed life appear with more insistent reality of colour and motion than in these pages, where we may gaze at leisure on the secluded dramas which go on behind the lattices of the hareem ; and all the thousand touches of the picturesque, in business, pomp, and religion, light up for us the streets which are nothing but long torrents of rolling-stones, not yet transformed to asphalt or wood-pavements. True it is that Gautier has left a book upon Constantinople, in which the pictures unfold a perspective and the buildings exhibit a relief that not even M. Loti can surpass. But Gautier is a little inclined to make himself the mere showman of the visible ; whereas Loti has entered into

the secret of the moral landscape, and in him details which the most indifferent pencil might sketch, carry with them associations and memories, as though with a voice resounding in the inward ear. Strokes the most passing and impalpable have their power. A ray of light falling on a niche in the staircase of that house at Stamboul which saw this tragedy of the sailor and the Eastern lady, takes him back to his home in France; and the two places are for ever linked in a mournful remembrance.

M. Loti somewhere gives to life the epithet of a "black magic." For him it is so. These fantastic yet real associations, of which Dickens and Hoffmann and Balzac have been the mighty masters, will seem, to most men who pride themselves on their judgment, imaginary or perhaps childish. But the true name for them is the sub-conscious; they sleep underneath the "threshold of sensibility"; or, like ghosts, are put out by sunlight, except for the poets and dreamers whose "thoughts at the back of the head," in Pascal's significant language, are always awake and stirring. To such, as we have said, the impression made by circumstances and the drama whose theatre is within, are of a thousand times more consequence than good or evil fortune. The story is only a framework; but the heart, the spirit, must be sought in the manner after which it was acted.

And thus we may pardon M. Loti when he declines to weave a web of intrigue, though provided with all that Victor Hugo could have wished for in "Les Orientales," by way of *dramatis personæ*,—fair Circassians, Moslem husbands of four wives, slaves in abundance, and the Bosphorus, with the moon upon its waters, waiting to receive Aziyadé in the sack which, on the principles of the Koran, she has undoubtedly merited. He repents, even, of the tragic death which, to satisfy the student of the feuilleton, he had inflicted in his first edition on the forsaken girl. But in "Fantôme d'Orient," the method which some call Realism—and for which no proper name has been invented—is applied by a *tour de force* of the most extraordinary and successful kind. We may regard this curious volume as a romance, told in the first person, or as a daring piece of biography; its end will be achieved

in either case. Loti has been compelled, with a heavy heart, to leave Stamboul and Aziyadé ; his wanderings have taken him East and West, but never allowed him to revisit the obscure streets of the Golden City, where they used to meet ; neither can he learn what has become of the Circassian. Her memory is a dream and a torture ; it is a ghost that appears to him incessantly, but has no speech in its mouth. When he played the part of Arif Effendi, he was poor and unknown ; since then, fame has come to him and riches are not wanting. He is the guest of the Queen of Roumania ; he travels from palace to palace, modestly, as a gentleman should, but like the celebrated artist he knows himself to be. Shall he reopen this closed chapter of his existence, and set his mind at rest ? Shall he take the world into his confidence ? He does so, and the outcome is a tale of many journeys in Constantinople, about the places where he was wont to consort with Achmet and Samuel, and where he hopes to find Aziyadé living or dead.

She is the heroine of this strange story, though never once does she appear in it. The old scenes come to life again : the mosque of Eyoub, the dim house at Hadjikevi, and all the existence of the East, with its animation, its bright dyes, its poverty, its poetic and childish incidents. The neighbours still remember Arif ; from her death-bed, Cadija, the warm-hearted old negress, guides him to the tombs which are all he can now discover of his friend and his beloved. The book is a prose "In Memoriam," written with passionate and unavailing sorrow—not such, we might think, as would be likely to stir feelings of sympathy in others, for who reads to the end those long epitaphs which hang on cemetery walls ? But the grief which hurries from street to street, which questions every one that had a share in the tragedy, which with a naïve but most intelligible feeling will have it all acted over again, and which is satisfied only when it has wept beside the grave—surely we must own, when we have studied all this, in the success of so daring an attempt, as in the contagion of sentiment while we read, that here is the secret over which Realism has been fumbling. Touched to these fine issues, the *elegy* may still survive. To

bestow upon a mere journey, with its common accidents, the hues of romance and a high tone of passion, which is extreme yet never carried to excess, gives undoubted proof that the rules of fictitious narrative may be put under lock and key, when we have learned how to construe life and its affections in the language of genius.

The world of Islam, "by some secret of atavism or pre-existence," as M. Loti would have us believe, has a peculiar attraction for him. In spirit he is half an Arab; and its dead white cities, its refined architecture, so free from the animal grossness that weighs down the Far East—even its music of flutes and tomtoms, though barbaric to the ear which is reminiscent of Chopin's harmonies, awake in him a soul that might, in other days, have wandered to Cordova and Baghdad. *Vouloir c'est pouvoir*, says the sanguine French proverb. M. Loti has willed, and not only Stamboul but the locked and guarded kingdom of Marocco has opened its gates to him. He is one of the few Westerns that have ridden over the flowery land of asphodels and violet iris, which lies between Tangier and the towering battlements of the holy city of Fez. He beheld the last of the Caliphs coming down into the courtyard of the cloister where he lives in austere seclusion; and studied the melancholy handsome features of Muley Hassan, who would have none of our civilisation or our commerce, and who, turning his back on Europe, sought to revive the greatness of Islam by prayer and scimitar.

Those who are enamoured of medieval times, who prize their chivalry, rudeness, strength, and abundance of colour, and who know them only from historians, should find much entertainment in the travels of M. Loti to Fez and Mekinez, which he has described in "Au Maroc." It is like "Ivanhoe" acted on the edge of the desert. The cities walled up to heaven, with their houses almost touching one another; the charming disorder of an existence which lies at the mercy of what each day may bring forth, yet is as regular in its hours of devotion as though the whole land were a monastery; the confusion of filth and magnificence; the life on the roofs at evening, under clear sunsets and in sight of the snows of Atlas, when

over the city passes the prayer of Islam, and *Allah akbar* ! seems to fill earth and sky ; the silent sunshine ; the pause which all things make to a Western, who is ever by instinct for hurrying on ; the fanaticism and the jugglery of the market-place ; and the crowds of prostrate devotees lying on the floor of the Mosque (untrodden by infidel footsteps) of Karaouin ;—has any one pictured such things, taking them down on the spot, and giving us the harvest of his own eyesight, with a simple grace like M. Loti ? The towers, palaces, and gardens of Marocco seem, he says, to be of an infinite old age ; they are in ruins or a wilderness ; and the flowers which carpet the land in springtime are self-sown, untended by the hand of man. In the University of Fez,—where fanatical students “take the rose,” going thence to preach the holy war down in Soudan, as Norman knights were wont to take the cross,—the masters teach their disciples astrology, divination, and Aristotle, from manuscripts dating back seven hundred years. The lofty gates, with their network of arabesques about them, which serve as entrances to the house of the Caliph, still have their occasional garnish of heads ; and when the Beni Hassem are caught plundering the caravan which has received a safe-conduct from his Highness, the unspeakable “punishment of salt” becomes their doom.

But “gentlemen of the road” still flourish, and are the most brilliant of horsemen ; the Jews tremble and grow rich in their foul Ghetto, which they may not cleanse of its defilements ; Isaac of York owns a great treasure which he counts and lends by stealth behind the blind walls that imprison his family ; and the slave-market has its heart-rending separations of kith and kin. Over all lies “the winding-sheet of Islam.” Muley Hassan might forbid his subjects to indulge the frightful sins of smoking tobacco and drinking coffee, or might set them an example of the saintliest asceticism ; it was utterly in vain. Sooner or later—M. Loti prays it may be very late—the doors will be thrown open ; the winding-sheet will roll away to the desert ; the picturesque rags, and miles of ruins, and the mysticism that sleeps and dreams among them, will vanish away before an alchemy which has developed into chemistry and the divination to which we are indebted

for the electric cable. "Moghreb" will soon be as surely a thing of the past as "Ivanhoe" itself, and the holy line of Mohammed will give way before the infidel, though with more dignified resistance than Sultan or Shah have recently displayed.

Sailing along the coast of Africa, when Moghreb is left behind, the voyager travels fifteen hundred miles without meeting a port; the burnt-up air which comes to him from landward tells him that he is passing Bled-el-Ateuch, or the country of thirst. If he is French, he may pause at St. Louis du Sénégal, a white city among yellow palm-trees, but he will do so only when extremity compels him, or he is going to join the garrison, or serve on the executive. It is a station cut off from civilised mankind, where the sun is always blazing and the sands are interminable, where there is nothing to do, and the moral atmosphere is a pestilence breathed in common by negroes, half-castes, and Europeans given to drink and debauchery. Musulman, Christian, and fetish worshipper tread on each other's heels, in that horrible *mêlée* of beliefs and practices which here, within a narrow compass, reproduces the corrupt world of Singapore and such human Babels. Only the silence is dreadful at St. Louis; there is a monotony in the confusion of things which the soundest reason can hardly fight against. M. Loti knows the region well; he has seen the French soldier in exile there; and "Le Roman d'un Spahi," which has its points of resemblance to Mr. Kipling's "Indian Stories," sets forth his impressions with an energy and a tragic feeling so remarkable, that we must suppose it due to the remoteness of the scene and the strange horror, culminating towards the last pages, of Jean Peyral's doom, if the work has not almost attained the popularity of "Pêcheurs d'Islande."

That M. Loti has no invention is abundantly clear. Jean, the handsome Spahi from a village buried in the woods of the Cévennes, is a good-natured ne'er-do-well, who is drawn in the conscription only to fall a victim to the deadly charm of the desert and the savage life, being tempted exactly in the same fashion as Loti's brother, and as Loti himself. In the distance, made faint by time no

less than space, we see the household group he has left behind—the old mother who writes to him letters abounding in tender anxiety, Jeanne Méry his betrothed, and his inarticulate peasant father whose chief anxiety is to pay his way. After a few years, they hope, the soldier will have served with the colours and will come home again; he will marry and settle down and be a peasant like the rest. But the yellow sunlight, the poison which it breeds in the veins, the creeping fascination of the land of thirst, the half-caste woman, Madame Cora, and Fatou-gaye, the Khassonkée maiden who has stolen her regular features, black though she be of Galam, from the monuments of Egypt—all these are influences which the trembling heart of the poor old mother at home could never have understood or reckoned with. Her great boy is not vicious; he did but play truant from school and walk about in forbidden coverts with an old gun when he was the *mauvais sujet* of the neighbourhood; and he breaks himself of the habit of drinking into which, out of sheer griet when Cora deceived him, for a space he had fallen at St. Louis. But he was always a little dreamy, subject to the silent witchery of things around. And this is a grim and poisonous world in which he spends the years of early manhood.

He always intends to keep his word to Jeanne Méry. Yet the dark child, Fatou, his slave, whom he can scarcely be said to love, who is a renegade from Islam, baptised but hung about with amulets; who cannot be trusted not to steal his money or his watch, and who is sometimes more apelike than human,—this creature it is that wins from the Spahi first compassion, and then the blindest of attachments, too strong for ridicule, rebuke, or the memory of home. He feels himself to be under a degrading spell, which nothing will break. The fierce African spring, the nights of Sahara cold and clear, the negro music, the wild and uncouth dancing of the bamboula, the very lonesomeness of the infinite sands, have transformed him into the mood of nature they so variously yet so powerfully body forth. He is no longer the peasant of Central France, but something hybrid and indescribable, touched by the sun with madness.

When his chance of relief comes, and he is standing on the deck of the vessel that would have taken him to Algeria, whence he would certainly have gone home, Fatou-gaye is crouching at his side; the merest accident suffices to rivet his chains once more. With great and tranquil power it is told how he came back as he went, a captive, doomed to feed the jackals in some nameless fighting with the ebony king, Bourbakar Segou. His eyes were "dazzled and fatigued" all day long with the motionless burning air; at night fell the white mists, terrible as death. Fatou has no shadow of a dream that she is the Spahi's destruction. How should she imagine it? She is quite willing to be killed by him, but her heart sinks when he throws her amulets out of window and bids her begone. For a very little while he is himself again. He sets out on his last expedition, with his friend Nyaor Fall, the "statue carved in black marble," and Fritz Müller, the Alsatian. They sail up the great river, on whose banks, everywhere thickly wooded or spreading out in lawns of delicate green, "all the pastorals of Watteau might have been displayed"; and, among the negresses who crowd upon the boat, Jean discovers Fatou-gaye. She has followed him silently with their child, whom the Spahi sees now for the first time. Reconciliation ensues, and an hour of strangely peaceful home life, though in the depth of the African forest.

It is the only break in the storm of lightning and rain that is to overwhelm them all three. Before the day of combat, Fatou, with the last pieces of gold that Jean had given her, bought amulets and poison of a famous marabout, as well skilled in medicine as in prayer. The Spahis went out hunting for Bourbakar, the dark chief; they were set upon in ambush, and their horses killed: Jean felt the huge knife of a negro in his breast; and under the dreadful sun, in the tangle of the forest, tormented by a raging thirst, the sound of the Angelus bell ringing from old times in his dying ears, the end comes upon him. Fatou, searching for his dead body and at length finding it, strangles her child by his side, then swallows the poison which the marabout had sold to her. On the same day, Jeanne Méry, away in the village of les Cévennes, is

wedded. And the jackals celebrate their feast in Africa, when the sun has gone down, upon the bodies among the tamarisks and mimosas. Françoise Peyral would never know what kind of lugubrious funeral had been given to her son. The black Venus had conquered.

From this African episode, written with all the fire and gloom of the Dark Continent, where the malediction of Cham lies heavy upon man and nature, it is a relief to turn, though but for the most passing of notices, to the volume in which M. Loti has delicately sketched an autumn spent by him in Japan. For he is nothing if not a wanderer. To his poet's fancy the kingdom of chrysanthemums and old china, of lacquer and gold, of serene meditative Buddhas, grimacing idols, and eternally polite and smiling people, is now a gorgeous nightmare, and now the most laughable of make-believe attempts at reality. For statistics and details of revolution he has never cared. We must consult the lively, adventurous pages of Mrs. Bishop, not M. Loti, when we wish to see the polite though hairy Ainos at home in Yezo, and to learn how the people live at a distance from the beaten track. Yet the new Americanised Japan is hateful in his eyes; and the old, which in its "sombre golden dream" at Nikko may still be looked upon with amazement, M. Loti paints to the life, with a splendour and a grace of language that Flaubert might have envied. Envious, too, would the author of "Les Tentations de St. Antoine" have felt, could he have been told of the strange relics from a time now vanished, which this younger artist has caught sight of—the hieratic glittering copes worn by empress and princesses, unlike any costume known to Western rituals, the garment woven as it were of silken cobwebs, belonging once to the heroine Gziné-gou-Koyo, and preserved during sixteen hundred years at the forest temple of the "Eight Banners," in ruined Kamakura. This is nothing else than the airy vesture, sacred and inviolable, the *zaimph*, of the goddess Tannith, which became to Salammbo a garment of death, "tout à la fois bleuâtre comme la nuit, jaune comme l'aurore, pourpre comme le soleil, nombreux, diaphane, étincelant, léger."

And the priestess dancing the Kangoura in hypnotic

trance; the bridge of the dead Shoguns; the Feast of Babies at Utsonomaya; the "garden party" within those mimic landscapes which surround the Mikado's paper-palace at Tokyo—where the Empress "Springtide" meets her guests, as rare and curious an apparition, in her trailing robes, as the Queen of Sheba; the pagodas, the tea-houses, the empty lacquer-roofed buildings which have about them all the glory and the stillness of a king's sepulchre—these, and not the meanness, or the grey monotony, of Japanese life, are the things which M. Loti has enched in his beautiful French style, selecting the materials as for a model in gold and ivory, of the "splendour of the East." He would not have cared to dwell upon the squalor and indecorum which all this varnish cannot hide. But the note of pity is ever sounding in his music: here it is given in the touching yet comic story of Toto San and her husband, or the record of the chivalrous Samourais, whose tomb he visited. For in childhood he made a promise to himself that when he was grown up he would undertake that pilgrimage to the "forty-seven faithful vassals" who died on behalf of the martyr-prince Akao, and whose story he knew from a boy.

Always, however, in the Far East, M. Loti remarks on the violent contrast between the Semites, whose imagination moves in arabesques and graceful geometrical lines, and the yellow race condemned to live as in a Beast-Epic, where soulless things themselves grin with horrid teeth, and ramp with claws, and stare out of glassy goggle eyes upon the men that fear and worship them. By instinct the Semites are iconoclast; the Chinese, Japanese, and tribes of the Golden Peninsula stand much lower in the scale. A world of land-monsters and sea-monsters holds them in its embrace; their temple-gates display the forms which haunt them, sleeping or waking, depicted here as guardians or attendants upon the supreme gods. Their mythology arises, like the bronze roof of the sacred gates at Nikko, supported by a host of chimeras and "celestial hounds"—a fantastic vision of horrors, with fangs sharpened and throats agape and eyeballs glaring; it is an obsession of prehistoric and

untamable life from which the calm ideals presented to us in Hellenic sculpture have been ever absent. Its splendour is "full of surprise and menace." Could an impression of the Far East be more strikingly conveyed than in this single phrase? We feel it must be true; and the silence which succeeds all the frenzy and the tumult, when Loti has passed the uncanny threshold and stands before the tomb of Yeyaz in the solitary garden, seems to conquer the disorder of existence by everlasting death, not by the attainment of a Divine Rest.

But we cannot linger in the exotic realms which no genius will ever make delightful to our Western peoples; and we have kept the good wine to the last. It is time that we spoke of "*Pêcheurs d'Islande*," as well as "*Mon Frère Yves*." By these two books and "*Le Roman d'un Enfant*" M. Loti has won the hearts of his readers. In nearly all the other works from his pen there is more than a touch of the dilettante who trifles with curious or agreeable themes, but surrenders himself never to the spirit that should bear him away. Here a strong inspiration has caught him up; we see the best of the man, no longer studying Byron or De Musset, but simple, unaffected, and strangely original. He cannot be dramatic, indeed; and dialogue was at no time his business. But for the "moral landscape," of which we have already spoken, "*Pêcheurs d'Islande*" is a masterpiece, with only a small group of figures, four in all, and these remote from Paris fashions, whether of speech or action,—French to the core, but how unlike the men and women who rise up in our imagination when we think of the famous names during the last half-century! It is true they are Celts and Bretons, brought up under the green forests of Broceliande, or in valleys near the ocean, where mist and sun make a chequered April climate, favourable to reverie; and where the spirit of the Arthurian legends has outlived the Table Round and its crusading knighthood. "Never," says M. Renan, speaking of his native rhymesters, "has any one tasted more than they have done, the long delights of introspection, the poetic memories, in which all the feelings of life are mingled—so undefined, so deep, and so piercing,

that had they but lasted a little longer, one must have died of them, not knowing if it were of joy or sorrow."

The loud Latin rhetoric, the gasconades which laugh out of a full throat with Rabelais or Montaigne, and are not scrupulous if the ape caricature get the better of his master decency, have no place within this charmed circle. "*Pêcheurs d'Islande*" has an austerity born of much sorrow, tempered and subdued by faith in the unseen, by the very greatness of its love, and by a nature more reserved than passionate. There is a full heart that does not speak, nor has any eloquence save in the steadfast eyes and motionless attitude; the temper of Undine, who could weep her disloyal husband to death, yet utter no syllable. It seems a shame to write upon this clear glass our modern names of things, so emphatic and vulgar when they are not unmeaning; but if we choose, we may call such a disposition "Idealism"; mindful, however, that should we suppose it to be feeble or evanescent, and not one of the energies that have shapen the world, we should mistake it greatly. Merlin, who personifies to the Celt not only wisdom but sentiment, has awakened from his enchanted sleep once and again, now to rehearse the story of King Arthur, and now to whisper "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" in the listening ear of Shakespeare. The Kingdom of Faëry survives amid steam-hammers and steel ships; it is the power of ancient days that will not die. And in "*Pêcheurs d'Islande*" we hear the echo of its music breathing underground, or making melody in the wild land of heath and stones and seaweed, as the winds blow over it from the Atlantic, and the storm gathers under a sunset flecked with flying clouds.

But M. Loti is not a Breton born. He sees the steeple of Creizker from on board ship, and makes a pilgrimage to the old church with Yves, yet he is no native, like Brizeux, the poet of Lorient, who, to quote M. Renan once more, "*découvrit l'amour breton, amour discret, tendre, profond, fidèle, avec sa légère teinte de mysticité*,"—or like M. Renan himself, by whom the long-forgotten city of Tréguier has been, to its own surprise, made famous in our day. What Brizeux chanted in

modest and touching rhymes, M. Loti has rendered in prose, but a prose that has the sea-salt in it, and the light and sparkle of foam, the scents of hidden violets, and a promise of the warm spring. Perhaps he would have done well to take Brizeux's line to himself—

Tous entendront ma voix, nul ne verra mes pleurs,—

and it is because he is no Breton that he suffers his own melancholy to darken with eclipse the story of Gaud's devotion to Yann, the son of Gaos, and their idyllic marriage. He is never himself the timid, solitary, dreaming, religious-minded Celt, whose early faith colours even his unbelief. The Huguenot temple, whose white-washed and desolate walls have in Loti's wanderings a kind of affinity with the unfurnished mosques of Islam, can scarcely teach him what the secret is of the chapels lost in the woods, of the local saints without number, and the "pardons," pilgrimages, doubtful rites, and invocations savouring of Druidism and nature-worship, to which the peasantry of Finisterre cling with the obstinacy of the savage. His own "slight tinge" of the mystic humour is different from theirs and more reflective. It has nothing so much of the personal, the "anthropomorphic," as men now speak, and it is incurably stricken with gloom. To his mind, Arthur never comes again, and the saints appear no less mythical than the sacred stories in which as a boy he was taught to put his trust.

So much in explanation of the deeper than Celtic shade hanging over "*Pêcheurs d'Islande*." But M. Loti's power of describing silent impressions, of translating sentiment into landscape, and giving a voice to things inanimate,—what he has called the fetishism in which he is a past master,—has laid bare to him the Celtic heart, whose stillness amid the conflict of emotions is like a charm. To gain the full effect of a treatment so peculiar, we should come to it from the boisterousness, the jollity, and the somewhat mercantile cunning, of the Norman stories told by Maupassant. It is like travelling from high noon in the market-place, encumbered by swine and oxen, to evening in a cloister, at the foot of whose steep and embattled walls the sea is murmuring. At once

we feel that Chateaubriand has slept under that roof and strayed along the stony marge of that ocean. René is not far away, and the voice of Fingal is heard on the night wind.

But the manner, although, like so much in the grandest French of the last twenty-five or thirty years, it may be derived through Flaubert from Chateaubriand, is direct, not a pleading for passion, not the rhetoric of *Atala*, and goes to the heart. We must say of our author, in the spirit of a remark applied, not unfairly, to his spiritual kinsman of Geneva by M. Renan, that "if he aims at philosophy, he has attained only to sadness." Yet perhaps all he asks of the reader is to look at his pictures and feel with him how true they are, be the philosophy what it may; to hearken while he sings "the song of the years that have fled, of summers that will come no more." There is a deal of "restless love" in his books, M. Loti has been told. Undoubtedly there is. And here, as in the Polynesian story, it is the savage life that intensifies the motive of affection: as in "*Le Roman d'un Spahi*" the sun plays his tragic part, so the battle to be fought between a woman's silent love and the sea which claims Yann for its own is the theme on which our prose-poet has expended a wealth of imagery and experience. The stage is great and wide—in the near distance Paimpol, the sleepy village where the two women, Gaud and Yvonne, pass their days of trouble, and stretching away in the background the fishing waters of the North Atlantic, where the sun is as pale as the moon and will neither sink below the horizon nor mount to the zenith.

As for the story, it can be told in almost as few lines as Hamlet's soliloquy. Yann is a kind-hearted, silent, proud, and unmanageable fisherman, serving in the Iceland fleet, which goes on a fishing expedition every year at the beginning of winter and returns towards the end of August. His friend, Silvestre Moan, who accompanies him, is persuaded that this handsome Breton giant ought to marry Gaud, or Catharine, Mével, herself a fisherman's daughter, but well-to-do, and now looked upon as a "demoiselle," not the paysanne she might have been.

And they have met, and, as Shakespeare says, "have changed eyes," at a wedding dance. Why should they not marry? For two years poor Gaud asks herself that question; but Yann is too proud to ask it—he will not again so much as look at her. Then Silvestre is drawn for the conscription, goes out as an able seaman to the Far East, gets bewildered amid its great lights and all the strangeness of his new experience, is wounded in battle with the Tonkinese, and dies on his way home. Gaud's father, according to the political economy which prevails in fiction, as he is rich must die a bankrupt; and the brave girl earns her own living, while she continues to support Yvonne, Silvestre's grandmother, who has lost her reason on hearing of her boy's unexpected end. It is now time for Yann to show his finest qualities. A pitiable, half-ludicrous mishap which befalls the old grandmother—herself almost too tragic a figure—is enough: the lovers come to understand one another; and their wedding follows on a stormy day, when the wind is abroad and the waves are leaping over the rocks. Their honeymoon does not last a week. The Iceland boats are sailing, and Yann goes aboard the *Léopoldine*. It is a new boat, with captain and crew of the choicest; and the season favours them. But how can their good fortune last? Long ago Yann had jestingly talked of his marriage with the sea, and invited his comrades to meet him there. All the fishing-smacks return, except the *Léopoldine*, which is never heard of more. Gaud waits and watches with the sickness of hope deferred, turning gradually to despair and a dreadful silence. Then consumption lays its hand upon her throat. We know that she is dying; but as the curtain slowly falls, it shows us afar off the tempest that has celebrated Yann's nuptials with the sea.

A sad book, unrelieved by the ray from stained windows and the lamp before the altar which, in a quite truthful Breton history, would, we think, not have failed to shine. It might be well to read, by way of corrective to a story in which religion plays hardly any part, the little sketch of Emma Kossilis drawn by M. Renan, which tells us how supreme and edifying

an influence it wields in the Celtic West. "Mon Frère Yves" is not so desolate. The tale, indeed, breaks off, and there is less of a plot in this endeavour to paint the "monotony of the sea" than in our fine English classic with which it may be compared, "Two Years before the Mast," by the American Dana. Yves is only Yann a little more kindly handled by fortune, who drinks in mad Breton fashion, and does foolish things "when he is not himself." With his disdainful but not cruel lip, his love of silence, his attachment to the moss-grown cabin where his old mother lives, down at Plouherzel in the land of Goëlo, his great strength of muscles, and boyish want of self-control when the drink is in him, Yves represents, in a way that makes the reader like him and feel angry with him by turns, the blue-jacket whose home is in Morbihan, and whose forefathers from time immemorial have bequeathed to him their longing for the sea, their untamed savagery, and their disastrous love of liquor. But the wild sea-dog is by no means a brute, although beyond question a savage. M. Loti, his superior officer, who has struck up a close friendship with Yves, and helps him over his troubles afloat and ashore, remarks with astonishment that his comrade of the fore-castle is no less given to dream and muse upon the things of Nature than he, the born artist, elect among ten thousand. Both are full of childish reminiscences, and live in their associations with objects which to all others would be trifling, but to them have a sacredness deeper than language may fathom. Their silence is not vacancy; it is a day-dream into which the commonplaces of education do not enter. They have no sort of fellow-feeling with civilised man at the desk, on 'Change, or in his wife's drawing-room. A deal of the old world still lives in them; they are really brothers, for all the difference of their bringing up. Officer and sailor alike, they succumb to the enigma of "the flaming sun, the desert of blue waters, and the idle magnificence," which burst upon them in their voyages south of the Line. "La grande splendeur inconsciente et aveugle des choses" is too much for them; and from that, and besetting scruples of their own, and the waste of existence all round, they conclude in silence to man's mortality. The

wholesome and good in their thoughts is derived from their first memories. Brittany, the "country of old times," has become a religion to them. But one lays down the volume with a sigh, marvelling that such kind hearts and gentle dispositions should still be heathen.

M. Loti has now arrived at that stage of celebrity when every work of his will meet with "*les extases convenues*," as Gautier puts it, and the multitude have it in their power to do him much harm. He is still somewhat *bizarre*, in his last volumes especially, when dealing with things sentimental; we notice in him a little too much of the *poseur*, who likes his attitude so well as to persist in it, as if he were a piece of waxwork. Even melancholy—but why do we say "even," when we may quote Byron and Carlyle to show the peril of being sad in the face of the world? Yes, there is always some danger of posing in literature; it lends itself to affectation, and may become diseased, like other noble things, in the age of advertisements. We could wish that M. Loti would not add one single page to the beautiful home-pictures he has given us. Even that touching account of Aunt Claire's last days in "*Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort*," though altogether genuine, may lead his friends to murmur, "Something too much of this." It should have been left among the silent things. We recognise in its author an admirable talent for writing, however unlike that manner of speech, "*forte, libre, héroïque, fantasque, et grotesque*," which in Montaigne—the first of French stylists—astounds and amuses, but is wanting in the charm of poetry. M. Loti has, too, a heart so full of kindness that it overflows upon suffering creatures whose only protest against pain is in their haggard looks and frightened eyes. He has the divine gift of the poet, which taking the commonest details of existence lifts them up to the light until they grow transparent. Where the customs of French society have not spoiled his austere bringing up, he is free from the morbid taint in that brilliant yet unsatisfying literature. He has enlarged its horizon, added a fresh chord to its somewhat exiguous music, and restored to the novel, which was dying down into mere and barren licentiousness, much of the charm

and colour of romance. He feels with the English poet, whom we daresay he has never looked into, that beauty is—

a living presence of the earth,
Surpassing the most fair ideal forms
Which craft of delicate spirits hath composed
From earth's materials.

And his delight is to read in the book of the sunrises and the sunsets, and to wander about all seas, escaping thus from the petty miseries of time into an aërial world of skies and waters.

But, though a rebel to conventions, he puts no large philosophy in their place. The human will, so powerful in fact, so splendid a resource as it ought to be in literature, is with him of small account. Like oil floating on water, which slips over it but does not mingle with it, the human Ego, in these great circles of sky and sea, emerges, floats for a little, is dissipated one knows not how, and Nature alone remains, a triumph and a mystery. Passive enjoyment, passive contemplation, yielding sorrow,—these make the Eastern temper, which is that of M. Loti. Compare with it the Greek artist's principle of energy, resistant or creative, and see what that has done in the world. With the cultivation of inward moods, there is no slight tendency in pity to become self-pity; the natural impulses may be trained as on the stage to play a part in which the acting is everything.

Nor do we believe that M. Loti's Pessimism will guarantee him against these consequences. Its arrogance may be a protest on behalf of man that there is in him a spirit, a character, which does not deserve to be mocked by "the dead things that shine and kill," by the world of blind forces now too strong for him. But the Supreme is not a mocker; and "Baal" and Shiva, whom M. Loti—as we learn from the quaint little story of "Suléima"—is inclined to worship, are false gods. The terror of the unknown is one thing; quite another is the melancholy of the Unknowable. It is astonishing that M. Loti should not perceive either in science or in faith a lifting over his head of the spiritual heavens with their infinite

azure, when he has always the eyes, and very often the heart, of a child. Like Amiel, disgusted with the real, he cannot frame to himself an ideal from the Bible or the Book of Nature. We pity him, even while we admire the tender and exquisite pictures he has been showing us ; for the finest things in his volumes are but reminiscences of these.

IX

NEO-PAGANISM¹

GOETHE, in the "Venetian Epigrams," has depicted with enthusiasm the Bacchanalian revelry, or dance, not of death, but of life, which took his fancy on the sepulchral urns of the Greeks and Romans. The marble, he says, becomes living and musical. Dancing fauns, birds on the wing or coquetting with golden fruits, Love with kindled torch, and the Satyrs blowing their wild sylvan music; a chorus of lovely figures circling hand in hand about the monument, wherein naught save dead ashes recalls the memory of suffering and loss: in such forms was the high Pagan wisdom revealed to him, which overcomes death with the exuberance of eternal Nature, all rhythm and harmonious evolution, a great unceasing festival of flowers and lights and easy sensuous love. It is a picture worthy of Titian, though the lines were drawn in a mood which no Italian artist would wholly comprehend. For the imagined victory of life over death in the very stillness of the tomb breathes an air of defiance, familiar to Goethe in his young days, and reminding us more of him who stole its secrets from Heaven and felt the vulture at his heart, than of the naïve Venetian, taught by instinct to paint, but hardly to philosophise. The Northern poet is intoxicated with the hues, at once glowing and lustrous, which burn for him on the thousand wings and shine out of the eyes innumerable, of that mysterious Nature at whose

¹ Goethe, "Sämmtliche Werke": Berlin, 1873. F. Schiller, "Briefwechsel mit Goethe": Stuttgart, 1881. Th. Gautier, "Œuvres Complètes": Paris, 1882. Leconte de Lisle, "Œuvres": Paris, 1874, etc. Th. de Banville, "Œuvres": Paris, 1873. C. Baudelaire, "Œuvres": Paris, 1885. J. Richepin, "Œuvres": Paris, 1890. W. H. Pater, "Essays on the Renaissance"; "Marius the Epicurean": London, 1873, etc. J. A. Symonds, "The Renaissance in Italy": London, 1877.

shrine he worships. But elsewhere in "Faust," for example, he has struck a deeper chord, as when he murmurs, "What a Vision! but, alas, a Vision only!" The intoxication and the awakening, the defiance which modulates into despair, and the despair which would fain lose itself in a never-ending whirl of passion,—these are notes of a significant and widespread movement in our time, which has been called the New Paganism.

It began a good hundred and forty years ago, when the public order of Europe established at the Peace of Westphalia was breaking up, and the revolt against Puritan ideals was every day enlarging its bounds. Hume had dethroned Calvin; Voltaire shook his cap and bells over the dark pages of Pascal. Religion, no longer hoping and fearing as in the presence of Hell or Heaven, had become for "beautiful souls" a diary in which they set down their pious sentiments, not a pilgrimage through the Valley of the Shadow, where Apollyon came out flaming amid doleful voices. The Deity was asleep, or woke only to shower His benevolence on creation. The prophet whom he had visibly anointed was Jean Jacques; and Jean Jacques, like Wieland, threw a grace, not its own, of the sweet morning air and woodland dreaming, over adulterous passion, encounters of the moment, and lyric licentiousness. The art of landscape poetry was born anew. Three famous pilgrims—Winckelmann, Lessing, and Goethe—journeyed to Rome, not as great lords did, to walk round St. Peter's and praise the Apollo Belvedere, but to evoke with the aid of its statues, pictures, and ruins, beheld under a canopy of bluest ether, the vision of the world long past. There, in the Villa Albani, Winckelmann, struck with a marble blindness to modern things, recovered that inward sight on which the Antinous and the Ludovisi Bacchus were to shine once more. Lessing, a Roman born out of due time, saw the Laocoon face to face, and with strong sense, more fortunate as he was more manly than Sadoletto, wrote the admirable volume which is now so little read, chiefly because its teaching has passed into commonplace. Goethe, a universal genius, but in character at this time Euripidean, transformed his "Iphigenie" from prose to an exquisitely

simple and stately verse, in which the antique marble blushes, one might say, with a faint rose colour. His "Roman Elegies," "Venetian Epigrams," "Alexis and Dora"—not to speak of "Hermann und Dorothea," in which an idyllic though sentimental freshness reminds us of Theocritus, while so unlike him in the prevailing ethos—were striking restorations of a lost sense, and essays towards building up the *templa serena* which an iconoclast Puritanism had burnt and ravaged. They foreshadowed the change which would pass over the European spirit not many years later, the consummation upon which poets and learned men alike were bent.

Winckelmann is the great forerunner of that change—himself, it has been happily said, "like a relic of classical antiquity laid open by accident to our alien modern atmosphere."¹ He was not precisely a teacher of commanding power. But as a temperament, a palimpsest inscribed with rude German characters, beneath which lay decipherable the fragments of a tragedy by one of the softer poets, such as Agathon, he excited Goethe's admiration, and revealed to his contemporaries the charm of those deathless writers whom an age of pedantry had degraded and misunderstood. Now, as Schiller sings, "Never alone appear the Immortals"; and in company of a critic who did nothing less than create an original taste and a corresponding organ for the literature of Hellas, making it a commentary upon the sculpture which filled the museums of the Vatican and the Capitol, came the famous Teutonic masters from whom our century has learned to read its classics aright. Ruhnken, illustrious in Latin as in Greek; Wolf, the old man eloquent, who, if he dissolved the nebula called Homer into a galaxy of stars, was so enamoured of the volumes in the study of which he lived and died, as boldly to style them "*sempiterna solatia generis humani*"; and even Heyne, reflecting in his commonplace mirror the light he gained from Winckelmann,—were pioneers in a way which has since been made plain, but which was then a track in the wilderness. They produced no immediate or general effect; neither had they a share, like the men of the

¹ Pater, "Renaissance," p. 193.

Italian Renaissance, in that creative instinct which they analysed, and the works of which they rescued from corrupt manuscripts. Comprehension, not imitation, was their aim. They were scholars, not poets. In the sanctuary of Apollo they served but to draw water from the fountain and to keep the sacred lamps trimmed. In them was no inspiration; yet, without them, who shall say that a second Renaissance would have come to pass? They were the dusty lexicons from which Herder, Schiller, Goethe, the historians and singers, drew that knowledge of the letter which, had it failed them, we cannot suppose that the light of antique beauty would have dawned again. For the eighteenth century was given over to elegant dissipation, and had not an atom of respect for ponderous learning, such as a hundred years before would have won applause on every side.

But of all Humanists none will compare, in breadth of influence or large achievement, with Goethe. The era to which cultivated moderns of whatever school belong, begins with the complex personality which united science, art, life, and literature in a strange amalgam, the result of a fiery fusion and melting down of elements as diverse as they seemed to be antagonistic. Yet they were but waiting for a genius strong enough to overcome their native hardness and reconcile them on its own method. The secret of Goethe's culture was that he declined to look upon the manifold forces of existence as a denial one of the other. To him, the spirit of negation alone was Mephistopheles. He fascinated opponents by agreeing with them. Hate any one he never could, for he desired too eagerly to see how the world looked from his enemy's point of view; the Olympian indifference, with which lesser men taunted him, was but a rare curiosity wrought into the art of living. He would have acquiesced in the tender French proverb, "*Tout connaître, c'est tout pardonner.*" Thus much he had learned from Spinoza.

Yet it was Spinoza, no less than Kant, who taught him to divide between light and dark, to dwell by preference within the clear ether which, in a noble sonnet, he calls the artist's realm, surrounded as he deems by an abysmal void of which the human mind can take no

soundings. The ring of light is a little world rescued from primal confusion, a rainbow of distinct or melting colours on a tapestry of night. Germans had been content to abide in the darkness of mysticism, provided they might dream about the Infinite and the Absolute, and worship the Divine depth of Silence. But when Spinoza or Goethe had seized that distinction, instead of dwelling on the Titanic elements relegated to the nether deeps, their love of the formed and the definite urged them upwards to the light. With Schiller they descant on the beauty of clear outlines. They desire to be as it were sculptors of the Divine which they apprehend. They are not seers or prophets, in their own conceit, but artists. Their ambition is to breathe fire into clay and to make it live and move, or to fix in marble the lineaments of flesh, giving it a surface so smooth and victoriously kneaded together that Death itself cannot pierce its texture. The immortality in which they believe is a visible endurance of the forms of things, one had almost said a crystallising of fire in the diamond, not a second world to restore the balance of the first. Such in Goethe's view, as in that of others, like M. Renan and Berthold Auerbach, is the everlasting calm which broods over Spinoza's Ethic. And such, we cheerfully admit, is the fixed and tranquil grace of the "Iphigenie," the refined and ironically handled passion of "Torquato Tasso."

At the close of his long career, the Weimar poet, speaking to Eckermann, made a notable confession. "Mental culture," he said, "may advance as it will, the knowledge of nature grow in depth and breadth, and the mind of man along with it; but farther than the sublimity and moral discipline of the Christian teaching, as it shines and lightens in the Gospels, it will not go."¹ Elsewhere he has written of the "Religion of Sorrow," to the heights of which humanity has attained, and from which it can never fall away. Yet we must not imagine that, in his unconquerable toleration of old as well as new, Goethe was bowing down before the historic truth of the Creed. In his correspondence with Lavater, and even more clearly when writing to Herder and Frau

¹ Eckermann, iii. 256

von Stein, he protested against any doctrine which would "weave a garment for Christ," by a "dramatic identification" of His personality with all the good in man. Yes, he insisted, that would be mere play-acting, as really as when he himself projected his own qualities, and, he went on to say, his own foolishness, into the characters of Werther and Egmont. Nay, the "legend of Christ" ("das Märchen von Christus") was reason good why the world might stand still for ten thousand years, and no man come to understanding, since it demanded as much knowledge and insight to defend as to assail it. Toleration was the only wear. In Goethe it was mild and sympathetic, though when hot-headed fanatics like Lavater provoked his scorn, it could be as disdainful as Voltaire's. But toleration it always was, never submission. Christianity was a form of art. He might have likened it to the transparent watch-face, under which the mechanism with all its springs may be seen and studied, while to the ordinary citizen it tells merely the time of day. Goethe had not simply revolted from Christ to Apollo and the Muses. In his own thought he had broken the shell of religious conventionalities altogether, and grasped the open secret that they are symbols, grave or pleasing, of that which cannot be named. Religion itself is but a dialect; the Christian hero-worship a variety of that dialect. Picturesque, barbarous, affecting, the key to much in the human mind, "the melody of a familiar *chorale*, which runs with admirable effect through another style of music, and draws into one by common associations the whole assembly,"—such, and no more, it was to him. The best exposition of his mind is given, with a solemn aphoristic grace, in that eloquent *Te Deum* which he has called the "Creed of Nature." It comes to this, that all things are the tragi-comedy of an overflowing but unconscious Life, a play in which the audience are the actors, and yet *they* understand neither plot nor *dénoûment*. It is the stream of Heraclitus hurrying along, full of golden gleams; for some the wine of inspiration, for others a deadly elixir, but always lapsing through infinite space, or the Epicurean void,—"*Geburt und Grab, ein ewiges Meer.*" Goethe, as years went on, grew too

majestic to be a reformer. But we could not be astonished did we find among his verses a stanza like that of Leconte de Lisle :—

Consolez-nous enfin des espérances vaines,
La route infructueuse a blessé nos pieds nus ;
Du sommet des grands caps, loin des rumeurs humaines,
O vents ! emportez-nous vers les Dieux inconnus.

Spinoza, Kant, and Goethe, give us by anticipation the nineteenth century, of which Carus excellently observes, that "it has struck its own chord on the harp of human existence." The dramatic power which Lavater, as Goethe objected, was applying on false principles to the Gospel, is characteristic of an age wherein, though no great tragedy had been produced, the world's chronicle was being rewritten with a patience and impartial insight betokening at once scepticism and sympathy in the historians. What has been said of ancient and modern worships was now applied to the whole of men's associated life and customs. "In both, the fixed element is not the myth or religious conception, but the cult with its unknown origin, and meaning only half understood."¹ Feeling, introspection, was everything ; the idea to which it pointed was undetermined. God has infinite attributes, according to Spinoza ; while Kant, though he discerns a luminous Beyond in the law of conduct, dares not so much as put the tremendous question, "Is there knowledge with the Most High ?" But we must descend from these regions of speculation.

While the Germans were thinking, their neighbours across the Rhine had begun to act. The French disposition is both absolute and revolutionary. When, therefore, Voltaire, without critical faculty or the enthusiasm of the poet, had reached the conclusion that the religion of Christians was a barbarous interlude between classic culture and modern enlightenment, he had simply one counsel to give his countrymen—"Ecrasez l'infâme." With their impetuous logic, the men of '89 proceeded to carry his doctrine into effect. Goethe might complain of their unphilosophic violence, and prefer the secret action of light to the noise and smoke of Napoleon's artillery ;

¹ Pater, "Renaissance," p. 175.

but his remonstrances were in vain. There was to be a French Revolution, a sham revival of the Roman Republic with all its dramatis personæ, consuls, lictors, tribunes of the people, prefects and triumvirs, and at last an Emperor so like in eyes and mouth to Augustus Cæsar that the bust of one might serve to represent the other. A hard, withering classicism, all straight lines like the architecture of Versailles, a metallic universe where no green thing would spring up, was built on the ruins of that rich and curious medley of laws, institutions, inheritances, and traditions, which had spread over Europe since the Roman Empire. But Christians had their revenge. Life and poetry which, fifty years before, had seemed incompatible with the orthodox dulness of the pulpit, deserted now from the French eagles. It broke on the astonished thoughts of Chateaubriand, Friedrich Schlegel, and the rising Victor Hugo, that the dew of their youth was on those very Middle Ages which had been so mocked. The motive, out of which came Romanticism, was neither strictly Christian nor at all dogmatic. With the poets of 1830, as with their master when he chose Goetz von Berlichingen for his strength, and gave to "Werther" its sentimental pathos, it was a principle that "Humanity" atones for all sins,—

Alle menschlichen Gebrechen
Sühnet reine Menschlichkeit.

The calmness of Goethe, lost to his generation by the drums and trappings of three conquests, was not recovered in the school of medievalism. Rosalind and Orlando might play at lovers amid the glades of Arden; the hunt, as it swept by with sounding horn, might seem to renew the world's springtide; but in the whole of that literature, despite its gorgeous tones, we are conscious of an unreality. The masked figures, who are so well made up, cannot take off their visors without the enchantment vanishing. Rebels and Antinomians, delighting in the grotesque and the impossible, these young Romantists had too little philosophy to purge their disordered fancies, too little science or criticism not to believe that when they had scraped and coloured the dim Gothic sanctuaries, they could bring back the spirit which had

built them. Never, surely, was an epithet better deserved than that of "dilettante," which Carlyle, the last of the Puritans, hurled at the artists of his generation. They could not raise the dead; but they found huge delight in embroidering their grave-clothes. Religion signified little to the author of "Notre Dame de Paris" and his contemporaries. When the medieval properties had grown familiar, they were flung aside; the mask of what was now termed "Christian Mythology" was taken off as unconcernedly as it had been put on, and a new fashion, not a religious restoration, vindicated to itself the influence which Chateaubriand and Sir Walter Scott could no longer wield.

All this might have been foreseen. Heinrich Heine, beginning as a romantic sonneteer, in no long while threw his monk's frock into the hedge—he had worn it in the easy style of Filippo Lippi—and avowed his preference for Olympus with its joyous deities to the grey mist which, he said, was sure to overspread the earth whenever Christians believed in their Bible. Of him we have spoken enough in a former essay. But it is remarkable that he made his *Hegira*, or flight to Paris, only a little while before Théophile Gautier began to write. Gautier is the French Heine, not to be mentioned in the same day with him for wit, or humour, or passion; yet a man of varied and unquestionable genius, destined, as Heine was, to traverse the enchanted forest of Romanticism on his way towards freedom and the Greeks. Baudelaire has acutely remarked, that in a time when French writers were duping themselves with make-believe religions and indulging in *pastiche*, Gautier could not keep from laughing, nor would be his own or any one else's dupe. He had the eye of a painter, the richest colour sense, and a skill in bringing out the precise tints of language, which showed him to be a real poet. His too facile eloquence attains in "*Emaux et Camées*" to the firmness as well as the brilliancy of an engraved signet. He knew the magic of words: that some have in them, as he expresses it, the sheen of rubies, pearls, and emeralds, while others glow like a piece of phosphorus when it is chafed. In the hands of an everyday writer, language is inert, and at the

best mere composition. But without doing violence even to French, he made his colours shine and his syllables vibrate with a life of their own. His mature style is large, airy, and solid, yet as light as the arabesques which he saw at Granada and which he has described so charmingly. One feels that it would be possible to walk about in his pictures. There is a perspective as of open sky behind the words which he employs, a supple movement in his rhetoric which carries the reader along with it and satisfies the craving for life and progress not easy to content when books are written without any purpose but the esthetic.

It is often said that the author of "*Mademoiselle de Maupin*" was not a man of feeling; that he cared only for the beautiful, and made all else a means to its expression. We grant that, if ever he indulged in French sentiment, it was merely to be like others, for his poetry and prose are both singularly calm. A celebrated phrase in that first unclean volume brought down on him, not unjustly, the anathemas of many good men. "I hold," said his hero, "that correction of form is virtue. Spirituality is not my business; I prefer a statue to a spectre, and high noon to twilight." We shall see that even the "bourgeois infallibility," against which Baudelaire uttered his cry, was not quite in the wrong when it condemned that sentiment. Nevertheless, on reviewing Gautier's career, and allowing for the sins and ignorances of his youth, we shall be persuaded that he cared as little about vice as in this daring page he professes to care about virtue. His mind followed his hand; he dwelt among the forms of things visible, and could no more see through them into the spirit than a child whose conscience is not yet awake. The vision and the faculty divine, which interprets because alone it has created the tragic situations of life, was not his; nor had one of the same school, except Heine, who was Semitic and a son of the prophets of Israel, so much as a glimpse into that high realm.

The artist, Mr. Pater tells us, in producing his supreme achievements, "will have gradually sunk his intellectual and spiritual ideas in sensuous form." And

he contrasts with the Greek, indifferent to spiritual elements and quite unashamed, the modern, who cannot steep his thought in the fire of colour without to some extent disavowing the Christianity in which he is supposed to have grown up. That is true, and is admirably expressed; only we must bear in mind how complete was the break, in France at least, between the generation which saw 1789 and that which arose after Waterloo. Gautier, in his obscene romance, puts on doubtless a "false air" of intoxication. But never was a man so disdainful of the cheap Parisian pleasures. On the other hand, we may search his volumes through, and nowhere shall we light on the spiritual intuitions which abound in those poets who have written for mankind. His colour-sense was unrivalled. He had a splendid and graceful vocabulary and a quick power of imitation. But he keeps his enthusiasm for the decorations on which he has lavished his skill. Paint—yes, he does so with a magic pencil; yet, after all, three things alone please him,—marble, gold, and the purple dye. His dreams are sunlight. He would have agreed with Heine's suggestive observation, that to the Pantheist, as to himself and Goethe, "the story of Nature," and not of man, "must in the end seem of chief importance." The art, indeed, which corresponds to physical science, is neither dramatic nor strictly human. It is landscape poetry, as in Wordsworth; the delineation of cloud-phantoms and reproduction of ærial music in which Shelley won his greatest triumphs; or a retracing of the outward semblance of living things apart from the soul which dwells in them. And here precisely is the significance of Théophile Gautier. He wrought under the new conditions of the time. On every side we mark the decay of personality as a factor in life and literature. The immense background called Nature, Fate, Necessity, Evolution, has been all at once lit up; the *flammanitia mœnia mundi* have taken all eyes. On so wide and vast a scene, what is man, what the works of his hands, the thoughts of his heart? Nothing, and yet again nothing. As entering into the picture he may deserve to be painted, but evermore he grows less and less; the

proportions of the world overwhelm his littleness ; and though Pascal vindicated for him the privilege of mind, how slight to modern analysis will appear that trouble among the molecules of the brain in which he was wont to glory !

Of course, while "the individual withers," and the bold claim of man to be as one of the immortals is put aside as a dream, it is always possible to hate and loathe those fruits of the Christian faith which have grown in their congenial soil. "Virginity, mysticism, melancholy," the young Gautier exclaims, "three words unknown,"—to the classic manliness, he means,—"three fresh diseases brought in by the Christ." What wonder if he deems thus of any creed which interferes with his passion for regarding, as again the English writer says whom we have several times quoted, "all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces, producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar and unique kind" ?¹ Sensations, observe, not ideas or spiritual disclosures, are in these words defined as the end of art. But how shall we develope that miracle of existence, the human Ego, out of sensations ? The thing cannot be done. If art has sunk to this level, personality must follow ; and literature becomes so much the poorer that, instead of the large discourse of reason, we can now interest ourselves only in tones, perfumes, colours, the thrills and spasms of a nerve, or complications of intense and faint feelings. Here begins, in short, the fatiguing and monotonous worship of the so-called Real which has taken the salt out of modern life, and has evoked a morbid curiosity, "insatiable as barrenness," always devouring like the infernal pit, which can never be filled.

Théophile Gautier, however, deals seldom in ugliness. He is hardly acquainted with the psychological puzzles which fascinated Balzac. He is jovial and exuberant, and once in a way Rabelaisian ; but conveys to his reader by a side-glance that nothing in his subjects is of consequence to him, that they are musical themes which he has embroidered, or studies in grouping and

¹ Pater, "Renaissance," p. ix.

drapery. He cannot persuade you that his characters are real. "Fortunio" is an operatic extravaganza; "Le Capitaine Fracasse," a piece of rich medieval tapestry; "Spirite," a fantasy; "Mademoiselle de Maupin," a celebration of sensuous beauty, in the guise of a defiance thrown out to the bald and smooth-faced bourgeois who believes that the Ten Commandments were devised for the protection of his household gods from thieves. "Le Roman de la Momie," that monumental Egyptian tableau with its solemn architecture breaking the line of a dark blue sky, has little human interest, not so much as the "Book of the Dead," and yet some wonderful old-world charm is spread over the landscape, the streets of palaces, the procession of the Pharaoh returning from victory. It is only a picture, but vivid and clear, as though the mist of centuries were swept aside, and Egypt and the Nile brought within our perspective. Flaubert has done a greater thing in "Salammbô," were not the awful light in which the man-devouring Carthage stands out before us too monstrous, too sickening, for the canons of a sane art. The irruption of Oriental ideas into French literature has, however, its peculiar significance; though neither in extent nor duration is it comparable to the extraordinary triumphs which the Hindu theogonies and the philosophy of Buddhism have won over English and German thought.

The poet of "Emaux et Camées" delighted in travelling; he gave his countrymen the most graceful sketches of lands and cities which lay on the verge of their horizon or even below it, seeing everywhere, with eyes of a Parisian *flâneur*, not the struggling millions at their task, but man the cunning artificer in stone, metal, ivory, silken fabrics, and a universal bric-à-brac. He registered and kept a solemn vow to behold the reality of those visions which haunted him from the "Arabian Nights" and the "Lament of Boabdil," last King of the Moors. He visited Russia in winter for the sake of its snowy prospects. He lingered at Constantinople, Cairo, Seville, Granada. His love of sight-seeing was not merely to make a holiday, but to enlarge his imagination and complete the symphony of colour, which

under the Northern Heaven fades into the dimmest shadow of the rainbow for lack of sunshine. His poetry, from first to last, he does not shrink from calling a "Pantheistic madrigal." It abounds in correspondences between one order of sensation and another; its scope is to pass on "from white marble to white flesh, from the bloom of roses to the crimson of the lips." It is a series of golden arabesques. He has read Heine, too, in translation, copying, as far as may be, the lightsome touch, but unaware that no French verses will ever give the sense of inward satisfaction, the warmth and poetic *naïveté*, which have somehow dissolved themselves into German ballad-singing.

The truth is that a conscious study of the beautiful ever tends to mannerism and artificiality. The flow of feeling is checked; a sort of gossamer, light yet clinging, interposes between the poet and his experience. He finds it impossible to be simple and direct; while, to quote a rare piece of home criticism from Baudelaire, there is something in the nature of the French that obliges them to judge analytically before they can feel. They are critics, not spontaneous or enthusiastic. What they admire is "good sense." With Joubert, they find it necessary to be sure that they are thinking as they ought, and the standard by which they determine how they ought to think is a well-digested, square-drawn theory. French logic is famous. Their poetry, on the other hand, does not attain the noble freedom which, like Lope de Vega, puts the rules of the drama under lock and key, that it may follow the creative instinct and not the "old masters." The hieratic cultus of beauty, as in the age of the Alexandrians and the Renaissance, is a sure sign that Homer has yielded to Callimachus, Dante to Beccadelli and Vida. It is the substitution of barren logomachies for religion, of pedantry for poetry, of mechanical principles for insight and power. The stunted temperament, which obeys fashion in its very revolt from orthodoxy, is a prerequisite of such close imitation and has been rightly condemned as provincial.

Too often, the Neo-Pagan artist has no brains to mix with the colours he has borrowed. He is a

scholiast, a beggarly feeder upon better men's leavings. And though he may possess an ear for music, there is one thing he can never do, the want of which betrays him. He cannot laugh. Wit and humour alike are out of his power. Sad for wantonness he may be, but not merry. When Gretchen said of Mephistopheles, "It is written on his brow that he never loved a human soul," she might have added, "and on his lips that he never broke into a human laugh." Sneering and a kind of languid sarcasm are natural to the analytic mind. But not laughter, not the keen mockery which sets the table on a roar. For humour is an appeal from overweening fancies which are pompous, or absurd, or criminal, to the truth and balance of nature; it goes to the quick, and there is no more discomforting proof that French civilisation is losing somewhat of its intrinsic value than the decay, for many years past, of its sparkling and chivalrous gaiety. Jacobins of the stamp of Robespierre had their vinegar aspect, and took their banquets of blood and slaughter *moult tristement*. In like manner the Neo-Pagans, since Gautier, have forsworn jesting. They preach the hollowness of things, see life around them in black, and practise their scales with a dolorous gravity. Some, as for instance M. Catulle Mendès,—a Jew, but unequal to Heine,—are adepts in themes on which we need not enlarge. Others, and of these none have surpassed M. Leconte de Lisle, worship the austere Muse, put by the praise of the multitude, and confine their attacks on the Christian teaching to miniature prose volumes for the use of schools.

M. de Lisle, who succeeded to Victor Hugo's armchair in the Academy, on that high bard's promotion to the senate of the gods, is a Creole, and a very resolute Pagan.¹ He holds by the lugubrious thought of Alfred de Vigny, which Mr. Swinburne has rendered in a most musical strophe of "Atalanta": "La vie est un accident sombre entre deux sommeils infinis." Yes, "between a sleep and a sleep." The supreme illusion, it would appear, is to fancy ourselves awake when we are but dreaming. De Lisle has won the name of a strong yet tranquil poet, exclusive and refined, who never sought popularity, and

¹ Written in 1891

who, if once and again he has called up a throng of disciples, seems as little acquainted with the fact as if he were a dead classic. To him, all varieties of civilisation since the Greek are steps on a decline; what is not ancient, or at least Asiatic, he terms with haughty affectation barbarous. In his discourse on Victor Hugo, we learn how he was smitten with the splendour of "*Les Orientales*" when still young in his native island, as though "an immense and sudden brightness had lit up the mountains and the woods," of which as yet he felt only the unconscious charm. He was no slave, he says, to an outworn rhetoric; he could admire what the Parisians criticised. Nevertheless, his own humour is far from enthusiasm. The Creole who has travelled from a land of the burning sun, who was nourished on heady perfumes, and should have chanted the dreams into which thought dies down amid the tropics, proclaims himself a lover of the impassible and the unimpassioned. He has not given ear to that "voice of the heart," which in the Romantic age excused, when it did not consecrate, the vagaries of fancy and the contempt of prosaic duties. The tenderness or effeminacy of Winckelmann's devotion to the antique has vanished from Leconte de Lisle's pages. He may sometimes permit a thundercloud, with its edge of purple menace, to darken the sky; but he seems not to know that human passion is as old as the race of men, or, to speak his own language, that Eros sprang first among the gods out of Chaos, and rules over them.

Hugo, he observes, undertook in the "*Légende des Siècles*," "to paint humanity under all its aspects, history, fable, philosophy, religion, science, summing them up as one great immeasurable ascension towards the light." It is the doctrine we call Optimism. De Lisle himself follows another route. "*Tu te tairas, ô voix sinistre des vivants*," is the savage cry with which he concludes his "*Poèmes Barbares*." In spite of the Greek radiance and beautiful severity, though he feels the inspiration which he has personified in "*Hypatia*," and writes, it has been admirably said, like one who has come upon the lost originals of Athens or Lesbos and is simply translating them, he cannot stay within the limits of that golden

prime. Something drives him backward to the enormous world of India, from Helicon to Mount Meru, from the Ilissus to the Ganges; or else onward to the *Dies Iræ* and twilight of the gods, beyond which unbroken silence shall reign. The Orphic Hymns, with their curious scent of frankincense and sacred flowers, give place to the Vedas. Forests of inextricable and gorgeous vegetation; jungles within whose secret places the tiger and the cobra lurk; streams which fall out of a snowy heaven and wash away the sins of penitents as they roll towards the horrible dark water which none may cross without pollution,—these things make the scenery in which the contemplative poet unfolds his story of Brahma and Bhagavat, or, condescending slightly to human weakness, tells, with a faint touch of sympathy, the love tale of Çunacepa.

In these far-away idyls the characters are not likely to touch European readers, although Sakontala has stirred many a heart, and the “Light of Asia” seems now a familiar and beloved name. But there is magic in the sonorous verse; and, whenever De Lisle strikes on his favourite theme, “L’unique, l’éternelle, et sainte illusion,” he breaks forth into singing, of which the fervour and sublimity cannot for an instant be questioned. No other, among Western poets, has attuned his strings to this message as though he believed, and were not running over a theme for the sake of exercise, to show his dexterity rather than his faith. De Lisle is an ardent mystic, lifted on the waves of desire, glad to escape from the “frightful clamour of the shipwreck without end,” which is eternally swallowing down those who trust in that specious falsehood, the nature of things. He can say with a smile, “I have suffered my heart to die,” while yet he lives on, waiting till the pitcher shall be broken at the fountain, the light blown out, and the “glittering mirage” be carried off on the wings of time. If he must pray beside the tomb of a friend, his petition will be that, like the dead, he may cease to feel “the shame of thinking, the horror of knowing himself to be a man.” It seems to him exceedingly vain and idle that any one should attribute what genius or kindly feeling he may possess to a Power which has created heart and brain. “Know

well," he would say, "that the only heart which beats with pity for the race of mortals is thine own." He denies absolutely the mercy and the justice in which generations have put their trust. "Arbitrary dogmas, revealed religions," he will have none of them. "Man," he repeats, "has made that holy which he believes; that beautiful to which he has given his love." All religious conceptions have been true in their turn; for what is truth but the ideal form in which we express our dreams?

Thus the adept, who has seen into all mysteries and all knowledge, who dramatises past and present, making himself coeval with every mood and aspect of being, has learnt that the veil of Maya, though it cannot be rent, hides only fresh appearances, as vain and fleeting as those which he has outlived. He is a wandering, pensive spirit, solitary always, forgetting his disappointment when a new scene is unrolled before him, but almost instantly discounting its promise, weary of the endless cascade that falling will not pass away in silver foam. However, he knows where comfort is to be found. He can "deliberately renounce the sentiment that he shall survive and be himself," when his earthly tabernacle is dissolved. The light to which he looks in death is an assurance of mortality. There is no such thing, he declares with melodious asseveration, as eternal life. Accursed were the centuries, and cruel no less than ignorant, in which men sacrificed this world to the next that was never to be born. What is the last judgment according to science? he asks. Not Paradise regained, but the ruin of a solar system, its particles scattered through infinite space, and Chaos come again. The supreme vision of philosophy is Nirvana.

We may contrast this phase of Neo-Paganism with the feelings in which it started. Goethe remarks that while Schiller loved Freedom and sought always to express it in his tragedies, he himself cared for Nature, with its large developments. But he would have judged Nature incomplete, were its fruit and blossom not the human world, active and self-conscious, intent, as *he* was during a busy life, on turning capacities to acquisitions. The greatest of modern Pagans, he believed in Humanism as the roof and crown of things. "Wilhelm Meister,"

sentimental and fantastic as it often is, preaches in varied tones the lesson of self-culture,—not absorption in the Unknown, but strenuous effort towards getting the mastery over blind forces. That, when old age drew on, he indulged overmuch his aboriginal Gothic tenderness for symbolic art and legend, is undeniable. He loved mythology, and he mystified himself as well as his readers. Nevertheless, he maintained, in the presence of a young and lusty Romanticism, the conviction which he shared with the greatest poets, that man is himself a universe, and the most wonderful and interesting; that he is not an excrescence upon Nature but its inward essence. Nothing would persuade him to become less familiar and stay-at-home than he had been, though instead of Goetz with the Iron Hand, he described, as in the “*West-östliche Divan*,” camels and cupbearers, Hafiz amid the Persian gardens, and bulbul singing to the roses of Shiraz.

What a gulf there is between this indomitable native sense and Leconte de Lisle’s fakir-like raptures! Goethe, the kinsman of his own Prometheus, sits calmly down, defying Zeus with all his thunders, while he fashions men that shall have an immortal spark in their veins. He is so sure of the proportion which, at all events in poetry, the never-ending vistas of Nature bear to man that, opening as he does on every side the sky about human life, he will not remember, though it be true, that all our comedies and tragedies are acted in the infinite. When he has sung the Prologue in Heaven, he descends to earth, and ranges from Faust’s laboratory to the wine-cellar where peasants sit drinking and carousing. He has grasped the vital truth that Homer’s gods would not delight us, were they anything but men in extraordinary situations. Though he enters like a Brahmin into the mystery of our littleness, he will not suffer it to lessen the intrinsic worth of feeling, thought, and aspiration. Poetry, he would say, must not be read through a telescope. The heart of existence for man is man himself. Goethe is not ashamed of the most trivial accidents of humanity, any more than Homer when he sings how the divine Achilles feasted on roast flesh and was his own carver, dividing the joint fairly. He was acquainted with good society, learned professors,

and the jargon of the Court. He knew when to be refined ; and he struck out hexameters and pentameters as deftly as the Humanist who could do nothing else. But he did not confound the faces of living men and women with a gallery of plaster-casts. Nature, the inexhaustible, had never limited herself to the Greek profile. Ugliness was piquant and humorous ; the grotesque, as in "Reineke Fuchs," had its charm. Why imprison the rich world in a museum ? The Shakespearian mind does not admire, as did Napoleon with his military stiffness, *les genres tranchés*. It is not in the least given to pedantry. But the new Paganism which we are studying is academic and artificial. Its very corruption is designed, not instinctive : a culling of deadly simples out of which Locusta, in her finest court-dress and after a prolix ritual, may brew the liquor which is to poison young Britannicus at Nero's banquet.

We need not expect, therefore, in De Lisle or the school of Parnassians who rivalled him in their Lydian measures, the strongly drawn characters by which Goethe, Schiller, and even Victor Hugo, will be known to the after-world. Helen, Niobe, and the rest, whose names meet us in the "Chants Antiques," are scarcely more than hieroglyphics. The imitation of medieval Spanish and Norse legends which the poet has also attempted fails to reproduce not only those stark and gloomy heroes, but the rhythm of their iron verse. We care nothing for Magnus, and as little for the story of Don Fadrique. When De Lisle would be dramatic,—in "Hiéronymus," to choose the least unsuccessful of his ventures,—we can hardly tell the first "walking gentleman" from the second. What he succeeds in is the half-human—the monstrous creature dwelling in much solitude—like Chiron, or Echidna, or the elemental Glauce, and Cybele, with her frenzied rout. But he lapses constantly into the life which has no eyes, and which is neither sad nor joyous, because it cannot feel. The summer landscape in "Midi" is perfect painting :

Midi, roi des étés, épandu sur la plaine,
Tombe en nappes d'argent des hauteurs de ciel bleu.
Tout se tait. L'air flamboie et brûle sans haleine ;
La terre est assoupie en sa robe de feu.

In like manner, "La Ravine Saint Gilles," "Le Manchy," and "Le Sommeil du Condor" give back, with an intimate sense of reality and a picturesque vividness, the scene which has opened upon the poet's dreaming eye. He is one with the objects of his contemplation; and, since they call for no exercise of the more spiritual faculties, but are level, so to speak, with an indolent though not inattentive reverie, they rise up in his verses by a natural magic and enlarge our communion with the inanimate. Amid their many-coloured vegetation, in the languid atmosphere, we perceive the silent white statues of Hellas, neither enshrined nor worshipped, but divinely indifferent to the change that has come over men's thoughts. It must needs be a lonely realm, and the poet who wanders along its moss-grown paths can chant no triumphal resurrection ode. He is the singer of plaintive elegies, graven with leisurely and minute care on his ivory tablets, abounding in grace and harmony, but faint as echo-music in the hills, touching no fibre of the heart which throbs in us to-day. The gods have gone into exile.

Heine discovered these divine pilgrims under strange disguises, and caricatured them, like the mocking Lucian that he was, in their fallen estate. When, he says, their sacred groves were confiscated, the heathen deities underwent a fate not wholly dissimilar to that which they had endured on the Titans storming Olympus. Long ago they had been compelled to flee from their golden palaces, and, masking themselves as well as might be, roamed over the earth in search of a livelihood. Nearly all of them went down into Egypt, where they hid in the forms of animals, and so escaped the fury of the earth-born or Typhonic powers. Now, for the second time, they were cast out as demons, their temples ruined, and the cross exalted above them. From gods they sank to day-labourers; they exchanged the blue skies of the Mediterranean for the mists of the Teutobergian Forest, slunk away amid the ignorant peasantry, and drank German beer instead of ambrosia. Apollo, who had learned a little of cowkeeping under Admetus, became a herdsman in Lower Austria; Bacchus renewed by stealth his Dionysiac festival in Tyrol, if it was not rather at the good old town

of Speyer on the Rhine; Mercury, in the garb of a Dutch merchant, was seen on the Frisian coast, ferrying souls across the misty waters; and Jupiter himself, the father of gods and men, was once detected as a seller of rabbit-skins, dwelling amid the icebergs in a remote northern island, where he held a conversation in Homeric Greek with sailors from the Levant who chanced to pass that way.

These shreds and tags of a doubtful tradition, whirled about in the poet's fancy, have more coherence than appears at first sight. They have been dipped in the colour of fable, but the truth they represent is worth insisting on. When Théodore de Banville, whose death is announced as we write these pages, peoples the woods of Druidism with the exiled troops which can no more return to their shining heights, while Zeus leads them sadly beneath the oaks, oracular once at Dodona, but silent and gloomy in this foreign land, he expresses rather a sentiment in which scholars might share than the actual course of events. The new Christian tribes did consult by night and in lonely places those gods which the clergy put under a ban; but they took them for devils. According to the legend of Tannhäuser, Venus, who in the "Iliad" is a simple-minded goddess, soon hurt and ready to cry with pain, is transformed into a witch bent on the ruin of her lover's soul. Diana, the Arcadian huntress, mingled in the diabolical gathering on the Blocksberg, and was mentioned far down the modern centuries among evil personages to be avoided, with cobolds, wizards, and the rest of Satan's retinue. Apollo was a vampire; and no one could fall in with a wandering god, on the desolate heaths from which they derived their name, or in woodland solitudes, but he was exposed to peril of soul as well as of body. All were servants of the mighty Master who was worshipped at the cross-roads, of whom Celtic or Norman peasants talked as "the Other": that is to say, the great Enemy. Paganism, when it lived at all, had these gruesome and forbidding associations. It was the dark but defeated rival of the creed which openly triumphed in churches and saintly shrines. It lingers still, but like a half-forgotten dream, or whines and murmurs in odd and

apparently trivial superstitions, for which those who practise them can render no reason. 'The great Pan is dead.

Now religion has inspired literatures, and out of the phenomena of Nature, its sunsets and sunrises, its winters and springs, mythologies were created by the first men, the poets who lifted their eyes towards the sky and answered with sublime audacity the questions that have since dazzled or tormented their descendants. But from literature when has religion gone down into the popular imagination? Books are the record, and may serve in a greater or less degree as the instrument, whereby religious ideas are perpetuated. Yet the prophet is seldom a scholar. He touches the heart more easily than he can describe or analyse the tremendous impulses to which his enthusiasm, kindling the multitude, gives a scope and an object. When Julian attempted to restore the Pagan worship, he sought help from Libanius and the rhetoricians; but all they could do was to vote addresses of condolence to the gods of the *ancien régime*. The creative force was spent; and the temples fell, as the oracles, centuries before, had grown dumb, by a species of fatality. Rhetoric and learning are a poor substitute for the spirit.

Even so it is now. Hellenism, or, to give it a wider name, Humanism, may play its part in disintegrating the present system of beliefs and usages. As a factor in the building up of society on a scale corresponding with the resources put into our hands by physical science, and by the higher stage of consciousness at which mankind seems to be arriving, it may help powerfully towards the good of the world. But we shall find it a duty to distinguish between the two elements, or perhaps we should say tendencies, which a careful student of antiquity cannot fail to have observed. One of these is sensuous, opposed to the intellectual no less than the moral development which Christian civilisation has pursued, and is in the present day revolutionary. The other has greatly advanced the progress of nations on the way pointed out by the New Testament. Contrast Lucretius with Plato, and our meaning will not be obscure. Or we may draw a line in the Dialogues of Plato himself, on one side of which we shall mark a continual ascent towards the Ideal he felt

after yet could not reach, while on the other is a swiftly gathering darkness. It is this second element, we should say—and Mr. Pater allows it—which is represented by “that brilliant group of youths in the ‘Lysis,’ still uninfected by any spiritual sickness, finding the end of all endeavour in the aspects of the human form, the continual stir and motion of a comely human life.” Not to dwell on the ambiguity which underlies this concluding expression, we can hardly refrain from astonishment when the doctrine of Plato, whether in the “Lysis” or even in the “Charmides,” melts from the high abstraction to which he would fain lift us, into a stream of voluptuous feeling, as it does in this account of it. Plato has again and again satirised, with delicate but killing irony, the sentimentalism which pastures on “the aspects of the human form,” and which refuses to go on onward to the spiritual essence of which form and sense and colour are but the lowest adumbrations. Is it requisite to quote the “Phædrus” and the “Symposium,” to prove that Socrates was not an Epicurean, or that he was something more? Of course, as a matter of taste, we may rank Praxiteles above Phidias, or the Caracci above Raphael and Leonardo. But let us not argue as though Greek sculpture could not be severe, and softness and effeminacy were the characteristics of Italian painting. There is a noble as there is a base Hellenism, and the laws which govern both are unchangeable.

We have seen how the conscious study of form, in Leconte de Lisle, has carried him on to the formless Hindu cosmogonies. Quite as inevitably, the cultus of the mere “aspects” of the beautiful turns to its opposite, and awakens a morbid desire to search into things foul and hideous. The sensual curiosity, of which some traces may be found in the Greek poets, grew to monstrous dimensions in Imperial Rome, and was far from unknown to the Paris of the nineteenth century. Its most remarkable exponent is, perhaps, Charles Baudelaire. He would have scorned the name of Neo-Pagan—yet he has himself recorded, not without complacency, the judgment of critics who assured him that Caligula or Elagabalus might have written “*Les Fleurs du Mal*,” had either been skilled in French metres.

It must be well understood that disciples of the school known as Decadent, though by no means classic in a noble sense, are unquestionably Pagan, deriving their inspiration from Catullus, Apuleius of the "Golden Ass," Petronius Arbiter, and the host of Greek lyrical singers whom Cicero could never, as he observes, find leisure to read. The style which corresponds to their sentiment is, in Gautier's language, debased if you please, but really nothing else than "art arriving at the pitch of extreme maturity under the descending suns of civilisations in decline—an ingenious, complicated, learned style, abounding in shade and refinement," which borrows from the dictionary of science, takes colours from every pallet and notes from every keyboard; which "hearkens to the subtle confessions of the nerves that it may translate them into speech, as to the self-betrayals of depraved passion verging upon old age, and to the wild delusions of a fixed idea becoming downright madness." He is reminded of the "green and marbled hues of decay" which spread over late Latin and Byzantine literature, as he dips into Baudelaire's poems; but what then? The dawn is long past; nor can we feel astonishment if all tones and suggestions of colour melt in one great blaze while the sun goes down. The bouquet of this new artist is woven of strange flowers with metallic lustre and intoxicating smell; in their cups we find, not the dew of the morning, but tears and deadly venom. How should others grow, asks his defender, "in the black soil, soaked with corruption, as though it were a graveyard, of our decrepit society?" We live, he continues, among the mephitic fumes which the dead-and-gone centuries have breathed into our atmosphere; and it would be as simple as it is vain to look for springing violets and forget-me-nots from an earth so tainted.

But the end of art, we observe, is still, as with Leconte de Lisle and the entire sect of modern heathens, "to evoke the sensation of the beautiful." Not eloquence, passion, or truth—Baudelaire affirms it with energy—but this one specific mode of feeling is the artist's aim. It leads, however, to the search for excitants, and, like the drunkard, turns aside from wholesome food. The triumph

of poetry, we are told, is to bestow a fresh taste on the jaded palate, or, as Victor Hugo wrote of "*Les Fleurs du Mal*," to "add a ghastly ray of horror to the artist's Heaven, and create a new shudder." These are the magic philtres of advanced putrefaction, not unlike the incredibly nauseous mixtures given by our ignorant ancestors to cure diseases; the more desperate the malady, so much more undrinkable was the potion. It is the irony of Paganism; sweet turns to bitter, self-dissection plunges a sword into its bleeding heart. The grave Eleusinian mysteries, after solemn chanting and symbolic dances, end in a debauch. Baudelaire himself, who did not wish to be regarded as a victim of the nightmare which he painted, tells the men of his time that they "kiss stupid Matter with great devotion, and welcome the pale light which hangs over decay." Heaven is now, he says, nothing but an illuminated ceiling above the *opéra bouffe* in which the nations amuse themselves. The foolish actor dances in blood; melancholy has planted its black flag in the brain. None save an idiot gives credence to the raving about progress and Utopias to be manufactured on the morrow, that take with delusive hopes the crowd round the ballot-boxes. Even death is a lie, not a revelation. Modern literature he calls "a saturnine, dismal, orgiastic volume"; modern life "the fatiguing spectacle of immortal sin," the "alembic of endless sorrow." Addressing the figure of a woman in the *Danse Macabre*, he exclaims, "Thine eyes are an abyss of horrible thoughts," but he is considering, not that imaginary creation so much as the Parisienne whose heart, to call it so by an abuse of terms, "has long lost its freshness, though not its unrest."

The only humour discoverable in verses of this worm-wood kind is Satanic,—the calm and direct narration of monstrosities as though they were things commonplace, which would set the guests marvelling at a banquet of horrors, and perhaps send some from the table. Deliberately, Baudelaire forswears reflection; as a poet he declines to sketch anything but the outward show and the sensation to which it gives rise. Matter, form, and feeling, these are his gods. But all must be artificial, bizarre, and, if possible, depraved. He too, and in ampler measure,

is of the strangely foreign, Asiatic, or barbarous school, to which De Quincey, Leconte de Lisle, and even Coleridge, to the latter's great misfortune, belonged—of those who seek to enlarge their vision by the use of haschisch, opium, and sensual perfumes. He has written much and curiously on the effects which they produce in his book with the significant title, "Les Paradis Artificiels." The same taste in literature, which qualified him to discourse upon Eastern intoxicants, led to his idiomatic and highly-wrought translation of Edgar Poe. Anything which departed from the normal charmed him at once; and the author of "Ligeia," "William Wilson," and the "Fall of the House of Usher," ranged with easy skill over the "gamut of exasperated tones," and revelled in a disorderly wealth of colours, which betrays his affinity with painters like Eugène Delacroix, and lends him an air more French than American.

It would be the height of absurdity, however, did we speak of a Zolaesque realism as marking any of these singular and dreamy poets. That after which they seek is not a definite and precise order of sensations, but something quite different, viz. the nervous ecstasy which comes with intoxication. They seem to hold, as Byron professes, that "man, being reasonable, must get drunk." Such, in rude Britannic phrase, is the upshot of all those contrivances to surprise the fancy, break through custom, and set propriety at naught, which drive us, when first we read men like Baudelaire, somewhat too hastily, upon the conclusion that he who devised them is a monster, whereas, in nine cases out of ten, he is but a drunken Caliban, enraptured and overcome with a draught of spirits from the wreck of better things which he could not turn to account.

Yet Nero's dying exclamation, *Qualis artifex pereo!* applies with great force to Baudelaire as to De Quincey. In spite of frustrate hopes, "life was to be the end of life"; the wild dancing procession, weaving in and out its eternal maze, seemed to promise the Emperor, the student, and the poet, a joy which might be acquired by some *salto mortale* that should leap beyond the laws of action and reaction, landing them in the hitherto

unachieved, where fruition equals and does not balk desire. A vain dream, but some have died for it! Epicurean martyrs, who, on the one hand, would make Rome a conflagration that they might fiddle while it was burning, and, on the other, have sacrificed manliness and the sanity of intellect to a phantom delight! Omar Khayyam (if it was not his English translator) has warned us in a tremendous line, that "Hell is the shadow of a soul on fire." Read the modern "esthetics," and with them Tacitus and the Augustan Histories; and say whether a description of the torment which grows from ever-new and never-to-be-satiated longing could be more accurately given. The imperial voluptuary commands and it is done: all pleasures are brought to him, in a piquant sauce mingled with blood to heighten its indescribable attraction. But he cannot eat, and he tells the Senate, in that famous letter from Capreæ, that the gods torture him day by day. There is something mean, in comparison with such enormous tragedies, about the pantings, and sighings, and impotent lamentations, which are the resource of your literary and artistic pretender, whose brain never had the force of understanding we recognise in Tiberius, and who mistakes an artificially simulated passion for the tiger-instinct peculiar to certain temperaments. Baudelaire has described, not the feelings which surged up within him, but an experience he thought possible to others. He did so, we grant, with a great and by no means unsuccessful audacity. But of his contemporaries and successors, be they French or English, who have dabbled in the same black magic, it would be true to say that they were deluded by affectation and conceit. The "orgy of freedom" is mostly scene-painting. These highly esthetic persons are by disposition cowards; were it not for the warm shelter afforded them by the institutions of society which they are always running down, their own frail existence would be swept into the neighbouring ditch. They could not struggle, and assuredly they would not survive.

But the effeminacy which is now identified with Paganism (in spite of Epictetus and the Stoics), though it has neither nerve nor genius, is not without danger. The

moral tone of society tends to sink when peace, combined with an increase of riches like that which has gone on during the last sixty years, wraps the idle and the educated round as with a velvet cloak and suffers them to dream at their ease. Luxury and scepticism have flourished together, especially in France, where the art of enjoyment has long been cultivated. The risk of infection, however, is greatest, not, as might be supposed, when pleasure, with the light Epicurean foam upon it, fills the cup, but as soon as it is drained to the lees. For if self-indulgence slays its thousands, despair slays its tens of thousands. De Banville, laughing at the philosophers, exclaims gaily, "Des mots, des mots ; cueillons les roses." It is a charming old refrain which will hurt none of us. But the voluptuary turned Pessimist wields a two-edged weapon. He argues from the senses against every higher science of things beautiful, and from his experience as a man of the world against what he contemptuously terms the folly of systems,—meaning, as a rule, the Christian Gospel. Our view of modern Paganism would be wanting in completeness did we pass by this supreme and final type, which, exemplified to some degree in Charles Baudelaire, is nowhere perhaps more strikingly depicted than in the poems and romances of M. Jean Richepin, whose *Opus Magnum* bears with praiseworthy frankness the title of "*Les Blasphèmes*."

We beg the reader's pardon if against his will and ours we are taking him into very undesirable company. But we have our reasons. The average Englishman is neither esthetic nor a blasphemer. He cares hardly at all for "the True and the Beautiful," when offered him in this abstract Greek fashion ; and he has a great regard for the proprieties. It is with extreme difficulty, therefore, and a reluctance which does more credit to his heart than his head, that he comes to perceive, if he ever perceives, the length to which an intellectual and moral revolution has gone among the educated classes in French society. Nothing analogous, except in a narrow and somewhat esoteric circle, has taken place on this side of the Channel. Mr. Arnold may have published his elegant diatribes against the Philistines, and gone about, as he said, with

a touch of the arrogance which nobody minded in him, "Confirming the Churches." Mr. Swinburne may have denounced, in his vehemently cold fury, the "pale Galileans" who did not understand his allusions, but thought him merely improper and young. The essays and histories of Mr. Symonds, the thoughtful and languorous prose of Mr. Pater, may have drawn students to expend a vacant hour upon them. But in England all this, like any other literary movement, is for the few to whom politics, business, philanthropy, and sectarian interests, hold out less attraction. The nearest approach an English lad makes to Paganism is when he gives himself to athletics; and in doing so he is delightfully ignorant of the tradition of the palæstra. If there is one thing which he hates and does not understand, it is effeminacy. He would call Marius the Epicurean disparaging names, were he compelled to read about him; it is certain that he would never get to the end of the second volume. But in France, what appears to us a sickly and even contemptible manner of thought, has become the substitute for a religious creed. Not, indeed, among the middle or the working class, to either of which these painted and chiselled enormities are simply incomprehensible; but in that ever-widening circle of fashion, politics, and literature, to which the rulers of the nation, its spokesmen and representatives to the rest of Europe, its journalists and Prime Ministers, have always belonged.

The argument of M. Richepin's volume is more formidable than his genius; yet he shows himself characteristic, bitter, and vigorous. Those who remember Bazaroff in "Fathers and Sons" will have silently compared the Russian Nihilist with the French, and found them in many points resembling. One is the Sansculotte of politics, the other of poetry and supernatural beliefs. Had Bazaroff not despised rhyme, he might have broken forth into this rabid protest which foams at the mouth, tears itself with rage, and runs wild in the hope of getting loose from the universal and stupid craze of men who, even when they are rebels and atheists, fall down before the ideals they pretend to have anathematized. M. Richepin has taken upon him the task of denouncing, in hard and

impetuous verse, those "cowardly compromises" and "bastard doctrines" which refuse to go more than half-way down the steep, suffering themselves to be entangled in prejudices, respect for which survives all belief in them. "Ought we to be so wanting in logic," he asks with great and not undeserved scorn, "as the devout people who have not the courage to be martyrs, or false materialists to whom virtue is yet honourable, or imperfect sceptics who doubt of everything but their own doubt? No," he exclaims, "I prefer to urge my premisses to their conclusion; cost what it may, I have compelled my Atheism to march to its journey's end."

Swift might have written thus, but with a more incisive style, and we should recognise in him the irony of unbelief which not only doubted of its doubt, but despised mankind, its religion, irreligion, gods and idols, too profoundly ever to trouble itself about proselytizing or polemics. The Nihilist, however, is a fanatic, and hates the good partly because it escapes him. "Tracking the idea of Deity," continues M. Richepin, whom we quote textually with a certain reluctance not difficult to understand, "I have found it amid a forest of other adventitious ideas, among which it has been my duty to carry fire and hatchet." He is human enough to allow, that in rooting up the grand superstition he has not spared more amiable delusions—"the trust in Righteousness, the longing after an Ideal, the worship of an Eternal Order in things," nay, "the very hope of a better life, whether in this world or in the next." But logic—and particularly French atheistic logic—does not hesitate. The idea of God has its "subtle and seductive avatars," even where it seems to have been swallowed up in larger conceptions. It lurks behind the notions of causality and belief in law (alas for the Haeckels and Huxleys who dreamt they had satisfied the thirty-nine articles of Agnosticism!), in the very apotheosis of physical science, and in the "last religion," which adores progress. Good citizens will come forth, he observes satirically, to hiss and cackle like the Capitoline geese, in defence of Law, Property, Morals, and family life, when he assails them. Hippocrides does not care. Scientific men, again, will not consent to look upon their formulas in the light of

logomachies; nor Positivists to have the censer snatched from their hands in which they were offering themselves delicious incense; neither will Freethinkers abandon without tears their absurd trimurti of "the Good, the True, and the Beautiful." Even materialists, who have been so illogical as to talk of laws and causes, who, as Comte might say, have given in to metaphysics, will shriek when cause turns out to be nothing but chance, and law an observed custom. But what else did they bargain for? "I have forced to its last expression," says the French Bazaroff, "that theory of a universe without God, which none have the courage to proclaim, and all in secret act upon."

With the aid of passion and reason, of science as well as of poetry,—though he considers them all alike the hallucinations of lunatic man,—M. Richepin proceeds to recommend his version of the Everlasting No. He has not yet, according to promise, given to the world his "Gospel of Antichrist." However, the prologue which lies before us may suffice at one meal. It is, in fact, a very strong argument against the deceptive rhetoric, and gentle or intoxicating romance, in the guise of which modern Paganism has been offered by its votaries. "Either you will go on to be Christians again," so the poet urges in truculent style, "or you must burn the sackload of relics you have brought on your shoulders out of the past." Oddly enough, Mr. Pater, whose delicate sense of the becoming would shrink from contact with this unabashed and ferocious cynic, has adopted the same method of argument in "Marius," carrying it on to a more agreeable issue. Marius starts where Gautier did, with a simple sensuous admiration for "beauty of human outline, which is virtue," and, pursuing it, he seems to end by laying down his life for the beauty of holiness. Nay more, with happy insight he perceives that "renunciation," which in the ancient Cynics put on so rugged an exterior, was a moment, as the Germans say, or a second stage, in the cultus of fair forms and of the virtue which they shadow forth to human eyes. There is a confused and somewhat dangerous truth, but still a truth, in all this. Only renunciation must be complete, not a

sly underhand proposal to get back the things we have surrendered, and others like unto them. Heine promised the innocent Greenlanders that they should have their sea-calves again, if they became Christians and went to heaven. But that is Epicurus with a cloak on. The firm and sound logic of the matter is, by no means that earthly charms, a hundredfold intensified, will be found in the highest religion, but that all the lines of beauty, as faint and fragmentary as we know them, point onward to the One Ideal.

M. Richepin argues with unconquerable force against the half-measures of scientific Atheism as of Epicurean Christianity. His "Bitter Sonnets" are well named. If we have resolved to precipitate the religious elements out of life, as we might squeeze water from a sponge, is it not laughable that we should still attach a meaning to the words "sacred" and "ashamed"? Shame denotes the presence of an ideal, and that which is sacred ought to be worshipped. Now, he says, be a consistent denier, and quench the light from heaven which irradiates love, marriage, friendship, the spring of youth, and even age's winter, when a fresh aurora, as of immortality, comes out of the north. What are the ideas in which poets and philosophers revel but golden bubbles? It is an old saying that man has created his gods like unto himself. Deny them, and they fall into the pit. M. Richepin passes in review a troop of characters from the prince to the hangman, which crowd along the carnival in their multifarious garb, every one the prey of his own delusion; their thought, he urges again and again, is merely the echo of that murmuring song which the blood keeps chanting in their veins. Reason is matter finely powdered, the foam of champagne as it mantles in the glass. Nature,—and he sings of her lovely apparitions with a warmth and even a gracefulness somewhat foreign to his mood of disdain,—ah, Nature is not the mighty mother whose children rejoice round her steps; she is, if to be addressed as a person, the frenzied woman who murders her first-born. But Spinoza was right: personality has no foothold in the world outside us. The exquisitely woven veil is torn down, and reality appears in all its nakedness.

Comment tout ce chaos serait-il harmonie?
 Comment de cette lutte éternelle, infinie,
 Peut-il sortir un mot que l'on érige en loi?

And so Progress, to which mankind are now setting up altars, with its belief in an end attainable by effort, is the barren, the dangerous chimera that has taken so many forms already. Laws, with their sublime pretensions, are an optical delusion; for understand, that whoever grants a principle of order in the world, is thereby committed to the interpretation of its details as a poem which the Divine Reason has inspired. But matter alone endures while forces change; there is movement in every direction, but no advance. Doubtless, the Christ will come again; if not He for whom believers look, yet another. What does it signify?—

Le monde n'a pas d'âme, et personne n'est Dieu.

Ohe, jam satis, the tired and certainly disgusted reader will exclaim. We should be the last to feel otherwise. But that is not the question. When the Lorelei in Heine's poem is sitting on the rock combing her yellow hair with a golden comb, or singing to the magic harp, with the music of the Rhine for the contrabasso, we fancy she is too naïve and pretty not to be as good as she looks. The boatman, who steers that way and is caught in the whirlpool, will have another story to tell. So it is with our esthetic, scientific, curled, and scented Paganism, which cannot endure the harsh Christian doctrine, or its antiquated warning about the law of sin in our members. How much more delightful to go back, in theory at all events, to Libitina and Priapus, "a Tuscan and Greek"? The cultus of beautiful moments, how exquisite! The "rehabilitation of the flesh," the philosophy which Gioja has restored and the poet of the "Reisebilder" preached, that we should "get as many pulsations as possible"—of sensuous gratification, be it understood—into our brief day, what a self-centred, easily justified ethics, yielding flowers and fruits of the most unexpected savour! It is the "new wisdom" by which the soul "becomes more and more immersed in sense, until nothing else has any interest." As Mr. Symonds reminds us, in such an age

licentiousness will be made a branch of literature. Mr. Swinburne finds that monstrous passions have their place in it, and their poets; while Mr. Pater, though he cannot approve, is aware that there may be a "luxury of disgust in gazing on corruption," which is akin to the feeling he extols. It is all a matter of thrill, of "squirm," as a remarkably clever man, the late Mr. Edmund Gurney, once said. "Nature, when it is healthy and beautiful, as you observe," wrote Schiller to Goethe, "has no need of a natural law, or of political metaphysics; and you might have added that it needs no God and no immortality for its stay and support." *That*, according to both these enlightened modern thinkers, is "esthetic freedom."¹ Freedom, certainly; as for "esthetic," had not the Lorelei a fish's tail, and her dwelling among dead men's bones? M. Richepin completes the delineation which more tender souls would fain leave beneath the Rhine waters. They prefer a half-length portrait. Well, we have not made the waves too transparent. Only we shall never understand Paganism till we grasp the truth that instinct is utterly selfish when not directed by higher aims, and, in man, demands a constantly growing capacity of enjoyment which Nature has once for all declined to give. That law, admitting of no exceptions, will suffice to justify the profound Miltonic dictum, "lust hard by hate." The hyena laments because, though he should discover the universe to be carrion, he has not, nor ever can have, "stomach for it all." Unlucky hyena, who began with the primal falsehood that Nature made the universe to gratify his appetite!

There is another, and a less degraded, reading, not indeed of Paganism, which is a cry of revolt against the light that has come into the world, but of Humanism as the Greeks themselves knew and lived by it. The best among them did not mistake the preliminaries of art for art itself. How can we think of their tragic poets as voluptuaries, or deny that "thoughts beyond their thoughts to those high bards were given"? The large and tranquil sky which shines over "*Iliad*" and "*Odyssey*" exhibits hardly a trace of sensuous vapour; the loftiest peaks of Platonism

¹ "Correspondence," vol. i., letter 188.

are covered with untrodden snow. What would be the judgment of the grave Thucydides, what the verdict of Aristotle, upon this effeminate, nerveless inanity, which ventures to appraise the putrescent hues of Apuleius above the reason, the wit, and the insight, the plastic vigour and self-control, owing to which Greek intellect is still the type of all sound thinking? Not outward forms and colours, but the living essence, the mind and truth of things, according to the "Poetics," is the object of the artist's striving. Socrates would have spent his irony on the poems and pictures which in technique are praiseworthy, but convey no message worth the telling. To divide beauty from conduct; to put the form on this side, the spirit on that; to dream of kindling a creative spark in ourselves by studying moods, and indulging subjective criticism, instead of acting in the world's tumult like men with hearts and consciences—what is it except to cut ourselves off from the very sources, whether of a noble human life, or of the literature which is its record? "Imitation," said Victor Hugo, with entire truth for once, "be it of the classic or the romantic, is barren."¹ Poetry is not in the form of ideas, which may be accidental, and varies with the age and the country; it is in the ideas themselves. Genius is neither a reflection nor an echo, but is the name we give to marked originality; and how shall any one become original by servile copying? As experience shows, only the most robust of temperaments will hold its own against the influences pressing upon it from without. When literature passes into criticism, decadence is not far off. We may worship dead gods, and cry, "O Baal, hear us!" cutting ourselves with knives if the fit takes us, but there will be no voice nor any that answer; and when the fire does fall from heaven, it is just possible that it will consume us and our gods together.

But the root of the matter, as we have hinted, is not in discussions about style. Do the Neo-Pagans give the key to life? Have they seen farther than the rest of men? What is their connexion with the immense tree of existence—with that Igdrasil whose leaves tremble and speak, whose branches fill the nine worlds, and which is

¹ See Preface to "Odes et Ballades" (1826).

planted deep down in the abyss? Can they sound the heart and reckon its secret throbbings? or have they not gone about the wrong way to understand these mysteries? To all of them, without exception, Christianity is a narrow, barbarous creed; their revolt from it they account deliverance. That is not the verdict of the greatest minds. Even Goethe qualifies it by the wonderful admissions in "Wilhelm Meister," of which we have spoken. Shakespeare, Dante, Augustine—to quote only these—who well understood the elements that are combined in Neo-Paganism, and who had traversed that stage, would never have allowed that the Christian was but a child frightening himself in the dark, and the Hellene a grown man, perfect in wisdom. Nor did Æschylus and Plato arrogate to themselves the superior enlightenment now claimed for the disciples of men so much beneath them. We read the "Agamemnon," or a chorus in Sophocles, and our thoughts pass on to the New Testament, where these noble bas-reliefs become living forms. The "Republic" of Plato, whether we will or no, has the air of a prophecy in its grandest enunciations; and, as they fall upon the ear, memory recalls the sacred history which fulfils their promise, the institutions lasting through centuries wherein some of their aspirations have been realised. Aristotle has become a Christian teacher; the training from which our Neo-Pagans derived their erudition was planned expressly to combine "the fair Humanities of old religion," cleansed from their dross, with the inculcation of revealed truths.

"The poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of Art for Art's sake," were not indeed the purpose aimed at by a self-respecting heathen, any more than by a disciple of Christ. To eat and drink for mere pleasure may be fitting for Ciacco and the herd of Circean swine; but rational beings put before themselves rational ends, they desire to rest in truth and reality, not in the passion of desire. "To maintain" sensuous "ecstasy," if we could, which is impossible, would *not* be "success in life." But, of course, it is not difficult to comprehend the principle which prompts such futile endeavours. "Experience," says Mr. Pater once more, "already reduced to a swarm

of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without.”¹ The universe, then, and our heart along with it, has become that funeral urn which Goethe saw painted with dancing figures. Its contents are ashes, beneath which the last glimmer of life has gone out. Personality, which in the New Testament is revelation, a kinship acknowledged between children and their Father, is, after all, the prison from whence we escape only by flinging ourselves into Nirvana. All this we understand; but one thing remains an enigma. If Leconte de Lisle when he chants “the Divine Nothing” melodiously, and M. Richepin striking his furious chords, are in agreement with their brethren, and speak the sober truth—if, again, we must consider existence simply as a number of pulsations which will come to an end when the heart ceases to beat, why are we to receive this announcement with rapture, as the Neo-Pagans declare? why hail in it the dawn of a new age? “The greyness of the ideal or spiritual world” may be trying to endure; but is not the disappearance of ideals the fall of Humanity? We submit that a philosophy which corrupts because it despairs, and which offers a momentary thrill of passion in the place of Life Everlasting, crowned with perfect human love, might be tidings of great joy to the brute creation, but has no right to call itself Humanism.

¹ “Essays,” p. 209.

X

LATTER-DAY PAGANS¹

EURIPIDES has left no more touching story than "Hippolytus the Crown-bearing,"—a play in which the poet canonizes purity and adorns self-denial with a martyr's death. While his choir of singing-women chant the praises of Aphrodite, those azure deeps down which a holier faith descends are opened to our view. The fell goddess, indeed, wreaks her revenge, but it is her rival, the woodland Artemis, that triumphs. Save the dying hero she cannot; lift him to the sphere of the immortals she can and will. Unlike her forbidding namesake of the Chersonese, Artemis here shadows forth the better Paganism which, scorning Ionian festivals, fled to solitude, in the hope of communion with what was divine. Her votaries laid upon themselves a rule and a yoke; their spirit of renunciation made them not unworthy to be disciples, by-and-by, of a Name which had the power not only to cleanse, but to consecrate. Hippolytus foretells the philosophic Marcus,—a Pagan saint, and a king after Plato's own heart. This way, if it continues to ascend, will take no small multitude along with it, to the threshold on which they may kneel in adoration before the Christian mysteries.

But the lower Paganism looks up to Venus Victrix, whom Lucretius celebrates:—

Te, Dea, te fugiunt ventei; te nubila cæli,
Adventumque tuum; tibi suaveis dædala tellus
Submittit flores: tibi rident æquora ponti,
Placatumque nitet, diffuso lumine, cælum.

¹ "John Addington Symonds: a Biography compiled from his Papers and Correspondence," by Horatio F. Brown (1895). "The Renaissance in Italy," by J. A. Symonds (1875-86); "Essays, Speculative and Suggestive" (1890); "Animi Figura" (1882), and other works. "The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry," by Walter Pater, M.A., Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford: 7th thousand (1893); "Marius the Epicurean" (1892); "Greek Studies" (1895).

She is queen of Epicureans, Cyrenaics, dilettanti,—of all who choose to be “exquisite humanists” rather than humane, who prefer sensations to principles and intoxication to duty. The pose which these men assume is more affected than Byron’s, and their pleasures are, by definition, sad ones. They are ever acting before a glass, with sighs carefully modulated, Laocoon-gestures studied at their ease. They have laid to heart Lord Chesterfield’s anathema upon too wide a display of teeth, and never laugh. Wit is superficial, humour ill-bred; and these serious triflers marvel exceedingly that so many can waste the time which they might have spent in pursuing savours, scents, and rhythms, upon the “flaccid interests” of law, business, politics, or philanthropy. When a sharp touch sums up their conversation as “art and self-indulgence,” they gently applaud. Another stroke might annihilate the art, leaving only the indulgence; and this, perhaps, would be a return to that “unity with one’s self” which, we are told, is “the eternal problem of culture,”—a problem solved during one brief moment in Hellas when morals held “the clue of unerring instinct,” and the worship of “beautiful aspects” was religion.

Two biographies lately published—the one real, the other imaginary yet in some sense no fiction—enable us to survey in detail that esthetic movement which has been with us these thirty years, the principles of which run up into Paganism, Cyrenaic or Stoic, but avowedly pre-Christian. Nor shall we be doing it an injustice, whether we assume that the late Mr. Symonds entered deeply into the meaning of a philosophy which, as time went on, he exchanged for another, or that Marius, the Epicurean of Pater’s shadowy romance, had many qualities in common with his creator. Those, indeed, who desire the simplest version, a plain tale, however cunningly varnished, of what the movement intended when it began, will find it elsewhere: in Mr. Swinburne’s “Poems and Ballads,” for example,—those long-drawn lyrics, and strange but intelligible rhapsodies, wherein the enthusiast of a Tuscan or Greek civilisation leaves no cloud of ambiguity resting upon his marvellous landscape. With Symonds, as with Pater, the discussion takes on a more complex form. Both, although professing

a distaste for the abstract, and Pater setting down "metaphysical questions" as unprofitable,—of no interest to him,—arrive in the end at a system. They may be described even in terms borrowed from the schools; if not precisely Neo-Kantians, they resemble such, Marius being as incapable of originality in ideas as the most helpless of the critical Germans, and Symonds escaping from the prison of his "world-making monad" only by the unexpected appearance on the scene of Walt Whitman, and by a revolt against culture for which levelling democracy is made responsible. Thus, to follow their windings will not, perhaps, be easy; yet the changes through which these men pass, and their verdict on a movement the effects of which are visible in the fine arts, in literature, and in social intercourse, will have for us something in the nature of an experiment carried out on our behalf.

An experiment which, to one of those concerned, was tragic enough. In his own pages, where the lights are as intense as the shadows are gloomy, Symonds writes himself down a failure. He despairs from the beginning; and after many years, although friends have come to him, and fame, and a wide spiritual influence, he despairs as at first. He moves round the circle from Leopardi to Goethe, and thence to the American whose Optimism would have struck Leibnitz dumb. What is the last word? Still Leopardi, "*E naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare.*" But you are an optimist, his correspondent cries. "Yes," he answers, "an optimist prepared to return to Nirvana, thankful that no proof is forthcoming to demonstrate immortality. This hope is sweet in my bosom." He can lie on the knees of Doom, look down the years past and see that he has been what he was to be, "a literary *viveur*," and at length disdain the Pagan myths which held his fancy or inspired his pen, as "a spectral corps de ballet on the empty stage of Nature." He, if anyone, has dedicated his life to learning and its esthetic uses; but now, with a decision almost equal to Carlyle's, he declares that genius, weighed in the scale against character, is light as vanity; culture not to be compared with action,—that "passion, nerve and sinew, eating and drinking, even money-getting, the coarsest forms of activity," come before it. "Life, not

literature," he exclaims. It is clear that when Paganism takes a certain large sweep, art, which was once its finest flower, may wither on its stem. But life, unless it falls to drift and dross, will demand a standard. We look for it eagerly in this immense correspondence, in the essays, poems, histories, flung out to us by the unwearied invalid. There is none. Talk we find of human service; abstract worship of Law; hymns recommending the "cosmic enthusiasm." But a rule of conduct, or grounds of hope—these Symonds cannot give; and he makes known his poverty with a frankness which cuts to the heart, as we read him.

So little from so much! Unlike many children of genius, he was the heir of a noble estate in intellect, with circumstances of gentle nurture, domestic happiness, friends of name, and the doors into public life open. Six generations of Puritans—whose letters he was destined one day to burn—had bequeathed to him a tradition of strenuous piety, transfigured or filed down in his father—a successful and art-loving physician, Liberal and Broad Church—to moralities and modern progress. In their fine old pedigree might be reckoned a Knight Templar, a Crusading captain, a founder of the Garter, colonists to Ireland and New England, a regicide, Cavaliers and non-juring clergymen, all coming down from Adam FitzSimon, who held lands in Hertford, Essex, and Norfolk under Bishop Odo. The Roundheads, however, prevailed in the shaping of Symonds's childhood, despite his free-thinking father. He is full of indignation at the hard noviciate that he endured in their Bethesdas and Blind Asylums, thanks to his grandmother Sykes, the Plymouth sister, and her "motley crew of preachers and missionaries, tradespeople and cripples." That lady held all things pleasant to be of the Evil One. Her ailing grandson was haunted by a morbid sense of sin; when the cholera broke out he prayed feverishly that he might not catch it. Religious to this extent he was,—no more. Of the Gospel, in these pools where pietism lay stagnant, he heard nothing. Mrs. Sykes—her only human trait seems to have been a love of flowers—took immense delight in "the minatory chapters of the Prophets" and the

Apocalypse. We cannot be surprised if a child brought up in this atmosphere suffered terrors unimaginable, or was persuaded that "the devil lived near the doormat" in a dark corner by his father's bedroom. But never anyone saw into the lonely mind, which through the brooding fancy lived a life of its own.

For if his surroundings were dingy in that town of Bristol, fifty or sixty years ago, yet the house and garden of Clifton Hill which his family occupied, and which he looked upon always as his true home, had a special air and grace of breeding. He learned to know pictures and poems, revelled in music and in the gloom of St. Mary Redcliffe, was inspired by Scott's "Marmion" to cry out, "I too will be an author," filled his imagination with Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis," wept with strange delight over the vision of the god Hermes, disguised like a shepherd boy in Homer's "Iliad," and went about weaving to himself day-dreams of Apollo as he served among the herds of Admetus. He came to distinguish and to love the fairest colours, the tones of the clouds, the beauty of lightning; and in country drives with his father, in pilgrimages to his mother's grave,—she died young, leaving a memory of grace and brilliant intellect,—in readings miscellaneous, from studies of anatomy to "innocuous Greek and Latin," this extraordinary boy, with no companion, not athletic, and, as he says, quite unmalleable, was training himself to be the man that we see before us. Limits his powers had, as strongly marked as the vivid perception which his eyes brought him, or as his facility in writing verse. He could not learn the multiplication-table or the subjunctive mood; he fell into trance until he was twenty-eight, lived more in sleep than during the daytime, was sensitive about his person, ambitious but "permanently discouraged," and, though seemingly candid, impenetrable.

Pietism and art were struggling thus over the boy's soul,—Religion raven-winged, grim and gaunt, while culture was Apollo ever fair and young, shining in golden armour. His eyes alone served him for windows of the soul: what hope, then, of victory on the side of that dismal phantom which called itself divine, yet never had

the glamour of beauty upon it? Though not creative, Symonds had been from the first as if bred in the schools of Athens or Venice. Our grey skies revealed to him the miracles of cloud-building which, long after, when he had made the Engadine his retreat, still seemed to possess all the elements of the sublime. Pictures in his father's house told him of that sunny marble world, perfect and flawless, which in the great galleries of the South, in the Louvre, in our own Museum, shines on the sordid background of modern life. Then the reserved sentimental boy finds himself in a public school. His father, who has not a dream that John is emotional or passionate, sends him to Harrow, and he is miserable. He stammers and faints, yet—the spirit which is in him holding on bravely—gains an influence over his comrades, makes lifelong friendships, learns Theocritus and Shelley by heart, and sits up during a summer night to finish the “Phædrus” and the “Symposium,” which give him back, in all the hues of a style beyond imitation, the enthusiasm whereon his home-life has been nourished. That was the aspect of Plato which decided his future. It saved him from a “torpid cynicism,” only too congenial with the less wholesome influences of a place where he was manifestly out of his latitude.

Oxford came next, and to Symonds it proved to be the large liberal abode of freedom and ideas,—“an ampler ether, a diviner air,”—with spirits so different as Jowett and Conington to offer him themes for meditation. His career had its triumphs. He won the Newdigate, took a first class, was elected Fellow of Magdalen. But his lifelong travels over the Continent in search of health now began. For, already, Jowett was remarking that he had “no iron in his composition,” while another described him as “worked out in premature culture.” A severe illness followed upon this indigestion of the mind. The cloud which now descended was never wholly to lift. Languid days, long agonies of doubt, suicidal fancies, prepare us for the announcement that he, who had never been a Christian by training or temper, had lost all belief in the Supernatural.

He wanted guidance; none was vouchsafed. The

Oxford of those years, he tells us, made men rhetoricians and sophists, who would come out brilliantly in the "Saturday Review," and, if they fell under Jowett's influence, were sceptics. But it gave them no principles beyond a vague sense of duty; they were taught, instead of philosophy, mere literature. There was no process by which a man would be compelled to think,—neither robust mental training nor sound gymnastic. Hence the crowd of amateurs, seemingly omniscient but in fact blind, among whom this candid critic of himself may be found by his own admission. Endowed with certain "proclivities," but no "commanding bias," he wandered aimlessly from one pursuit to another. It is the year 1862, but in a rich and amusing picture which he draws of his undergraduate flutterings, we see the dawn of that movement wherein Medievalism, the Renaissance, Mr. Ruskin, Japanese ware, old blue china, and the French symbolists were to play their several parts.

Conington, indeed, guided his pupil along the paths of literature by "principles of common sense and manly prosaic taste." The Hegelian Thomas H. Green, afterwards his near kinsman by marriage, could not bestow on him a sense for political or abstract interests, but strengthened his character by exhibiting a noble personality in their long and affectionate intercourse. However, on the whole, Symonds remained what he had been at Clifton, a self-absorbed dilettante. His apprenticeship to the golden alchemies of the "Opium-eater," whose style was a standing-dish at College breakfast parties, and his dabbling in Mr. Ruskin's "paint-box of colours," did not seem likely to atone for the loss, not merely of creeds and dogmas about which he had never vexed himself, but of the belief in divine realities now altogether gone. Henceforth, the world invisible was to be an enigma or a torment as he stumbled on, bleeding and solitary, along the Via Mala which he called existence. To such issues did Professor Jowett urge forward his young men, now in words of miraculous efficacy, anon by the burden of a paralysing silence, and, too often, with interjections which their victim charmingly describes as at once "crushing and inconsequent." The luminous

haze that spreads over so much of our English Plato became to Symonds an enfolding Alpine mist, with here and there a silver-circled glacier piercing through, but the way uncertain, the guide as perplexed as his followers, and crevasses opening into unknown depths.

Down such a crevasse Symonds was hurled, almost at the moment when his path seemed brightening. Elected Fellow of Magdalen, suddenly a charge was brought against him, says Mr. H. F. Brown, by a "quondam friend," resting upon "garbled letters," which in its consequences was nearly fatal. "Deeply wounded in heart, brain, and nerves,"—to borrow Symonds's account of the matter,—he went abroad, and for the next three years, until 1865, his wanderings, laments, and physical distress make a sad story. With eyes useless and brain enfeebled, unequal to serious reading, no man had more need of religion. His emotions called aloud for faith,—“it is the oxygen of life,” he said; but his intellect rose against every form of Theism. “The old realities have become shadows,” he exclaimed, “but the shadows torment me.” His dreams were avenging Furies, even in the calmer Oxford season; now they showed him to himself in frightful and disgusting aspects. Music wrought like an anodyne; but it was neither food nor light. He married, and always found in the home-life a refuge from trouble. Yet he says mournfully, “*Je suis venu trop tard dans un monde trop vieux.*” The artist in him feels aged, the man a wreck. And he is five-and-twenty.

By instinct he had begun to write upon the Elizabethan dramatists. But he consulted the oracle in Balliol, and the answer was significant of Professor Jowett's curious infelicity, when genius did not come to his aid. If the Master could have gone through those brilliant pages of correspondence which we now admire,—abounding in the perception of colour and form, in exact details of things experienced, and in thought no less solemn than impassioned,—he would have pointed the way to literature, but not to the drudgery of translation. Symonds had eloquence; he painted landscape in words as accurately as the great writer whom he has sometimes copied, though not too closely; and his prose sonatas are splendid in their

language and rhythm, subtle in exposition, and occasionally very pathetic. Who but must grant that the proper task of Symonds was criticism?—but, as Matthew Arnold would say, criticism touched with emotion. Professor Jowett did not think so. He had a way of giving his pupils tasks to perform, “undoubtedly useful,” for which they were not in the least fitted. And now he praised Hallam,—that dry scholarly man who displayed neither rhetoric nor emotion when he was writing,—nay, it appeared that a certain Zeller, a German (and Symonds detested Germans), had published a library of books on the Greek philosophers, to dig and quarry in whose mine Jowett enticed his reluctant friend. For years the translation haunted him; a “muddy stream,” not even, like Bayle’s Dictionary, “a mighty tide of ditch-water.” It would not flow; and Symonds, at last, gave his unfinished manuscript to another, who has no doubt, by this time, printed it. To the original translator it was a task which fatigued eyes and brain, drove him upon the wrong tack, and brought neither reward nor gratification.

His “fatal facility” had been censured at Harrow. It was now thoroughly curbed by Zeller, and, health not returning, the uncongenial duty left his mind vacant, his spirits depressed. He calls himself one of the world’s invalids, who can but exclaim, “Imus, imus præcipites.” Handel’s glorious notes, the “gardens of Alcina” at Monaco, leave him wretched. He is “a saltless soul” doomed to “rot for thirty years on the dunghill,” borne down by a lethargy in which will and power of thought are exhausted. The high Alps revive him again, and he writes: “I have a deal of faith not reduced to a creed—*Quis Deus incertum, est Deus.*” But is there a Father in heaven who will listen when he prays, and answer him? Alas, no; the vague Deity has, perchance, neither ear nor voice. What is left? he asks. “To live bravely in the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful?” So the wisest of modern men. But Symonds, taking the words to himself, adds a striking comment, “We cannot be Greeks now”; and “hasheesh,” not the vital oxygen of faith, will have to satisfy us. “We can dull the present by living the past again,” he says to a philosophic friend, Mr. Henry

Sidgwick, with whom he corresponded largely, "in reveries or learned studies, by illusions of the fancy and a life of self-indulgent dreaming. . . . Take down the perfumed scrolls. . . . Behold, there is the Athens of Plato in your narcotic visions; Buddha and his anchorites appear; the raptures of St. Francis, and the fire oblations of St. Dominic; the phantasms of mythologies, the birth-throes of religions, the neurotism of chivalry . . . all pass before you in your Maya-world of hasheesh, which is criticism." May we not reply that it is decadence?

Yet these airy phantoms have no warmth in them; and he is plunged into "the glacial region of the soul,"—*Abyssus abyssum invocat*. If there could be reconciliation of his many doubts, Beethoven and the C Minor Symphony, not affirming or denying, might yield it—"the height, the space, the gloom, the glory," in which "we know," but cannot frame a creed. Still roaming up and down the world, studying Norman cathedrals at Coutances and scaling the heights of Mont Saint Michel, he waits for a revelation or a crisis. The maladies of the spirit seize him while wintering in Cannes; there, as Teufelsdröck would say, he wrestles with the Everlasting No, and is almost overthrown. Hours too black for human language pass by; the soul comes forth, living but scarred; and now he will shape his rule of conduct in one single axiom. Out of the "devil's cauldron"—his own word—he has emerged; it is a day of conversion on which he moves into "Stoical acceptance of his place in the world, combined with Epicurean indulgence." A combination, indeed! "These two motives," he observes, "restored me to comparative health, gave me religion, and enabled me, in spite of broken nerves and diseased lungs, to do what I have done in literature."

Not once, but intermittently, suicide came within his view. "It offers no solution," he said, and waved the tempter from him. And the solution which he did accept? Was it "some clear faith in things that are pure and eternal"? Or "a definite conception of Deity"? Not so. In the vacuum of abstractions—thus his biographer sums up—he could no longer breathe. It was impossible to find the Absolute. He turned then from thoughts to

things, from ideals to sensations, like a second Doctor Faustus; and while his state of "entire negation" became, as it were, crystallised by so deliberate a choice, in action he was to be the dilettante, curious and impassioned, who looks not for to-morrow. All moods of existence, if they be pleasurable, are justified to him. When they give pain, resignation is the wisest course. By such adjustments, adroit and ever-renewed, did Goethe, in the spirit of a stage-director, contrive to enact the drama of life, not believing in "things pure and eternal," yet, on the whole, a successful artist, who with his last breath might whisper, "Vos valet et plaudite."

Hippolytus, then, offers garlands to Aphrodite, and plays like a child on the edge of the abyss until he falls in. The Stoic travels towards his grave singing; the Epicurean borrows King Solomon's seal on which is inscribed "Omnia vanitas," and in virtue thereof bids genies and demons serve him up a banquet of pleasure. To "live in the whole" is to enjoy the moment. We cannot forbear observing on the coincidence, as undesigned as it is remarkable, between these passages in a real biography, and the moods, the language, and the reasoning ascribed in an imaginary one to Marius the Epicurean during his term of servitude to Aristippus. Certainly Pater was not drawing from Symonds; but with the sagacity of principle he traced those ideal curves which, given a temperament thus compounded, the man was likely to follow.

Now, had he taken hold of a "clear faith," all would have gone well with him; and Symonds, who long had known the charm of Augustine's intimate and unconstrained self-portraiture, might have found—in the Seventh Book of the "Confessions," we will say—the truth which he was seeking, a heaven of cloudless light above his mind. This, to speak in a later tongue, is "the Divine Idea at the bottom of appearances." But our unhappy man is not Augustine. "I feel paralysed," he writes again, "by the confusion round me, science and religion clashing, no creeds emergent, social conditions shifting like quicksands, the phantasmagorias of old literatures

rising up to mock our modern style." In an age no less chaotic, the great African Saint could learn where the track led up to the Mount of Vision. But he, though for a time bewildered, had come to live in communion with the Highest. Augustine was alone with the Alone: Symonds was by himself.

But he will go to the grave singing. Henceforward, the Diary loses its introspective tone. It narrates the travels of an idle, sufficiently well-to-do Englishman through Corsica, Tuscany, Venetia, and back to the Alps. It is full of enjoyment, observation, historical acquisition. It tells of Italian studies, in Tasso, the "Orlando," and Tassoni. The "persuaders of death" remain, it is true, the one sect irrefutable; and in the midst of golden verse-reading, we hear this minor chord, "I am incapable of living for any purpose, or of raising my soul to the altitude of a delusion." His friend argues that wickedness goes down upon an inclined plane. "Maybe," replies Symonds; "but what is to arrest one, and why should I seek to be arrested?" He wishes that he could embrace Positivism; but he sees too clearly that Comte "makes his universe revolve round the men on this planet," and a scheme so pre-Copernican appears to him inane. At Clifton he lectures on the Greek poets, with inward disgust, and yet listeners say that "his intellect set ours on fire." In conversation he was at his best; the "intense emotional susceptibility of a limited and rather superficial kind," for which he gave himself credit, was making of him an "Opalstein," as R. L. Stevenson afterwards called him. His brain, impenetrable to abstract ideas, left room for things visible, with their atmosphere of feeling; it was capable of the "splendid audacities," the *Paradoxa Agnosticorum*, let us term them, which gave to his conduct of an argument the pleasure of the chase. With his "sensuous artistic temperament" was combined a vein of rare sweetness. He was winning friends wherever he settled, and, though not expectant of success, held on, never giving up what he undertook, but weaned from literature ere he had chosen it for his profession. "I was disciplined by failure into democracy,"—this sentence and the like proclaim with incisive sharpness a new creed.

"I will have nothing," says Whitman, prefixing an oath, "of which all cannot have their counterpart on the same terms." The words are echoed by his disciple. And in a vein thus detached from the task he was entering upon, Symonds began his studies of the most select and exclusive movement which Christian Europe has witnessed—we mean the Renaissance.

First, however, he touched at Palermo and Girgenti, and paid a religious visit to Athens. Of the Greek spirit he says, with that remembrance glowing in him, "it is pure light, all human and beautiful." The serenity, the Doric grace and order, steeped him for a little while in their calm. Then, returning to England, he met with an accident, and was ill and broken. He travelled again—Malta, Tunis, Rome, Perugia, Florence, such are the musical names that we light upon in this pilgrimage—and Symonds is eloquent in his conviction of the debt which we owe for beauty and refreshment of soul to Italy, a lesson he was never weary of enforcing. The worship of German ideas, except in Handel and Beethoven, he deemed a superstition which cannot discriminate between Hellenic loveliness and idols shapeless and primeval. Always he lived by sight and not by faith; yet the artist may decline to bow down where "Germanism" has nought save dull abstractions or ugly dreams to console him for his "fantasies in marble" now smitten to dust. How unlike is the Blocksberg to the Acropolis!

He was thirty-five when he published the first volume of "The Renaissance in Italy"; and he lived to finish that large undertaking, as well as to write several books of poems and essays, to translate the sonnets of Michael Angelo, the memoirs of Cellini and Gozzi, and to compose a "Life of Buonarrotti." His activity, great and incessant, though illness struck him down, ranged over the provinces of literature with an ever-ripening judgment and a fastidious choice, until he could say, in an instructive sentence, "We love the sternest things in life best." For the duties of the historian, he was on more than one account singularly disqualified. Names, dates, events which he had not seen or felt, might be learned with facility, but vanished from his mind as if writ in water.

“Vague, ill-digested, inaccurate, rich in possibilities, poor in solid stuff”—this description of faculties which were to be employed on a task where Gibbon might have failed—does not inspire us with confidence. Nor will metaphor and imagery, whereby Symonds hoped, if not to subdue, yet to circumvent philosophical ideas, furnish that insight, lacking which a student of the Renaissance is sure to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, to dream that the “worship of the body” is a “new birth unto freedom,” and to degrade science into the apologist of a sensual and decorated unbelief. Seeing he will not see, and hearing he will not understand.

These are faults of a more serious kind than the purple patches and rhetorical tone which their author has reprobated in his volumes. He moves everywhere on the surface, content if he is dealing with painters, poets, humanists, in a fashion almost operative, and on a system so conventional that his characters fall in, line for line, with the legends and caricatures which a little judicious criticism puts out of court. Large and complex themes—Catholicism, the Reformation, the revival of learning—handled a thousand times by partisans, striking their roots deep, and abounding in tyrannous individualities, which differ as much as Julius II. and St. Charles Borromeo, as Erasmus and Poliziano, Luther and Savonarola, would seem to suggest a weighing and sifting of evidence, and a readiness to hear both sides. But Symonds would not always be at the pains to understand the language he is quoting; and so faint is the grasp which he has upon his subject, that when a master more judicial and inquiring comes forward,—when Bishop Creighton sets the Roman events in a just perspective,—he has hardly a word in reply beyond the suggestion that somewhere, *quand même*, an adequate cause must be found for the Reformation. Unless the whole drift of his volumes be mistaken, that cause he had himself set forth in words of vehement eloquence. But one who is incapable of mastering principles, to whom the philosophies of the medieval period are a myth, scholastic Latin an enigma, the enthusiasm of religious nations a far-off sound, and the *vita contemplativa* of saints simply unintelligible, may, indeed, pass sentence on the details

of painting, or guide us through the galleries of antiques ; —he will never be the Thucydides of an age when human thought was more active than even earthly passions, when interest, political or private, felt the imperious sway of theology, and when a friar at Florence or at Wittenberg proved himself a match for dynasties as cultivated as the Medici, and for sovereigns ruling in both hemispheres like Charles the Fifth.

One sample of his uncertain dealing may suffice. In the History, Michael Angelo, greatest of Christian and Italian artists, is exalted as the "Prophet of the Renaissance." And what is meant by the Renaissance? It is "the spirit of mankind recovering consciousness, recognising the beauty of the body through art, liberating the reason in science and the conscience in religion, restoring culture to the intelligence, and establishing the principle of political freedom." But, in order to this noble consummation, the Renaissance breaks with Church and Christianity. It is Humanist before all things, and Humanist means Pagan. Hear Symonds again: "The essence of Humanism consisted," he declares, "in a new and vital perception of the dignity of man as a rational being, apart from theological determinations, and in the further perception that classical literature alone displayed human nature in the plenitude of moral and intellectual freedom." These are brave words. The question is, Will they explain Michael Angelo? Let us call our other witness, Pater, himself enamoured of freedom, a Humanist to the core, but with his eyes open.

Pater writes concerning the mighty sculptor, the poet of deep and melancholy thoughts, the artist who has rivalled with his brush Isaiah and Ezekiel in power of vision, that he was, not the prophet who began a period, but "the last of the Florentines, of those on whom the peculiar sentiment of the Florence of Dante and Giotto descended." Nay more, that "up to him the tradition of sentiment is unbroken"; that, although "his professed disciples did not share this temper," he is so far medieval as to endow sculpture with a certain "inwardness" which the Greeks never possessed; that from the Middle Ages he derived his "central conception" in painting, on the vaults of the Sistine Chapel,

the "Creation of Adam," and that he did but give to their floating dream or ideal the perfect touch. Among new Pagans and new Catholics, observes Pater, he seems a ghost, or *revenant*, from times which to them had grown fabulous, lingering beyond his day in a world not his own.

Hard it surely is to reconcile this disciple of the ascetic Dante, of Nicola Pisano and Savonarola, with the sensualists and profligates who sold themselves to unsavoury imitation of classics they did not comprehend. But we may spare ourselves the trouble. Symonds, not for the first time, has sung his palinode. We turn to "Essays Speculative and Suggestive," and we find the warning which he might have addressed to himself, that between "moral enfeeblement and esthetic vigour"—notes whereby in so many histories, including his own, the Renaissance has been defined—"there existed no causal link." On the contrary, "The best work of that brilliant period was accomplished during years which still retained the glow of medieval faith and the verve of republican enthusiasm." And he continues, "What survived of force and goodness in the nation enabled painting to flourish between Giotto and Buonarrotti." So then, we ought not to signalise the deliverance of the human spirit as following upon a new movement in the fifteenth century; there is no such break between the faith of Dante and the "best work," which was done by Michael Angelo, Raffaele, Leonardo, as would justify us in marking off by a blank page the New Testament of art from the Old. Boccaccio infects the poetry and romantic fiction of the Medicean age with his own licence; therefore, observes Symonds, it stands condemned to "artistic mediocrity." The "myriad polished lines of Bembo, Molza, Sannazzaro," the narrative poems which abound in Humanist circles, we may "abandon without a sigh," for there is no life in them. Seneca has rightly judged that "*effeminat animos amœnitas nimia*." And the symbolism of Bartolozzi—to which the Renaissance tended from the beginning—is "insincerity and second childhood," the aim of which was "to clothe a faint and saccharine emotion with graceful form." Symonds, forgetting his Lydian moods, informs us that he is of one mind with Aristotle, who has laid it down

that "morals are architectonic," that goodness is queen over truth and beauty. We have, in short, sung our palinode.

So vaporous a conception of principles will furnish no supreme historian. With all his reading, Symonds could not achieve a classic page; the poems which he has left—although not, as in the severe judgment of Conington, to be set down as without form and void—are but echoes from Shelley, Swinburne, or Leopardi—cries of distress in another man's dialect, plagiarisms of which the pathos consists in their representing genuine emotions by means of an essentially false language. The true Symonds appeals to us only when he describes Nature; then he is admirable in word and painting; he has seen, and therefore he can speak. Everywhere else, in his volumes, the expression overflows, but does not charm; it is the vocabulary of passion served up cold; much rhetoric troubles the sense, like a turbid stream flowing over it. We put the book from us and forget its argument; narrative there is none; and the thought is diluted by floods of metaphor, not distilled into epigrams, or reduced to first principles, or set forth in the lucid order which understanding alone can give. Was not this failure? Symonds, at last, lets fall his pen: "Literature has come to an end with me," said the tired virtuoso. He would fain withdraw from the battle; but he remains "a naked soul" and suffers on, courageously; not complaining, except to friends, who welcomed his Amiel-like monologues and laid them up in cedar.

"It is the centre of the soul that ails." He felt it deeply. Literature, which helped to keep him alive, had by the subjects chosen—"Greek poetry, Italian culture in one of the most lawless periods, beauty in nature and the human form"—overstimulated the imagination and excited cravings which it was powerless to satisfy. Under Oxford training, he might have said, as Socrates did of the fifty-drachma course at Athens under Prodicus, "The noble breed of heroes are a tribe of sophists and rhetoricians." The "literary viveur" cannot hope to produce a monumental work. He must endure a long regret "for sterner paths abandoned, and for nobler triumphs carelessly foregone." In such terms of resignation Symonds bids farewell to his ambiguous Muse.

Yet he enjoyed a fame, which spread over the evening-tide at Davos a certain splendour. Ordered by physicians in 1877 to take the long Australian voyage, or to winter in Egypt, some angel had guided him to the dry sunshine, the "snow-life, stars, and frost," and the silence for weeks unbroken, which make up his picture of a student's sojourning in the Alps. Friends came and went; correspondence grew; the peasants around looked up to him for counsel and effective aid. He walked over the mountain vales; gave the cheeriest of entertainments, in which high and low found a common interest; was open-handed, serviceable, alert in conversation, sympathetic to younger men, and not envious. And though pain, on the most august scale, as he expresses it, searched him through, he could reflect that "in the five years since he came there dying," he had been allowed a "wonderful Indian summer of experience." As long again he was to fight his enemy; and while life burnt low, its heat and radiance were astonishing. His childhood tendencies to dreaming with open eyes returned. "Thought," he says in many kindred metaphors, "is the only thing, yet it is nothing." The real is far beyond appearance, and tragically hidden. Sometimes he escaped to Venice or London, but his home was now in solitude. The illness or death of near kinsfolk—the loss of his eldest daughter especially—tried him; no loud applause greeted his ventures into poetry; and, while the last considerable work he put forward, the "Life of Michael Angelo," met with a recognition which its industry and exotic knowledge deserved, on the whole he had ceased to hope for immortality, whether of the kind which George Eliot celebrates in her curiously hollow strains, or such as Christians look for. How could he desire to live again? he asks; adding, "I should be always restless." He was, as we have seen, "an optimist prepared to accept extinction." Strange optimist, who might have quoted the melancholy verse in which Lucertius breathes his despair:—

Nec nova vivendo procuditur ulla voluptas.

He could not die too soon.

And so the "green tree of life" was shedding its golden fruit; "grey theory" darkened the sky over which swept

those hurricanes of unbelieving yet tremulous fancies under whose blighting influence the spirit wasted away. He was a Stoic, in spite of it all. "Do not," he pleads in a sad but strong letter to one who was tempted to go down the "inclined plane," "do not delude your conscience with the seductive dream of becoming corrupt." He knew too well that Epicurean mood. And now he advises that intellect should conquer passion, the man realise his better self, and "sing to God." *Quis Deus?* That would be the natural inquiry. Symonds could never answer it.

A verse of his own "song to God," the words taken from Cleanthes, but the sentiment, pantheistic and stoical, long his ruling idea, is graven upon the tomb where he lies buried, not far from Keats and Shelley, in the Roman garden, hard by the pyramid of Caius Cestius. For he died at Rome, far from Davos and Clifton. It affirms the Supreme Law, and submits,—“Or if I strive, still must I blindly follow.” One touch of the irony that pursued Symonds through life could not be wanting: his old Oxford friend and master, light-minded as always, seeing truth only in the luminous haze, wrote above this hymn of Pagan despondency, "*Requievit in Christo.*"

We turn, with a sigh of relief, to "Marius the Epicurean."

Here is the likeness faintly sketched of one that, living under the Antonines, walked in shadow, communing with himself—that hung upon the lips of Aurelius, and stood by when Fronto and Lucian discoursed, the one grave, the other mocking and satirical,—that could learn only through the eyes, and held existence for such a dream as will not come a second time, yet was so loyal to the spirit within him, so delicate, pure, and detached, as to fulfil the saying he had never heard, "Greater love than this no man hath," and to lay down his life for his friend. According to the student of manners whose biography we have just now dealt with, atomic scepticism unsolders our being; it leaves the phantom of self in a world without aim or substance; it is suicide. But Marius takes up his parable, and by dainty resolute cleansing of the sight, he comes to a vision in which there is the peace of the gods, "*Pax Deorum.*" He dies a martyr, almost

a Christian, who began as a devout acolyte of the heathen mysteries. From Aristippus and the Cyrenaics he had learned to renounce the Absolute; yet he discovered in his brilliant pleasure-loving comrade Flavian where lay the taint of Paganism; and in the soldier Cornelius, in Cecilia the noble Christian matron, he saw the light breaking through which was to transfigure mankind. Never did he bring garlands to Venus' shrine. Yet it was his love of the Beautiful which made him one in spirit with the "flores martyrum," whose fragrance created in the young man a new sense, whereby things heavenly told him of their neighbourhood. The sadness he dwelt in was shot through with gleams of hope, tender and bright as the morning dawn. For him, at the last, horizons hitherto undreamt of were telling of larger skies; so that in losing his life he seemed to be finding it. This "obscure sense of possible sublimity," this feeling that, whatsoever point he gained, he yet "had something to pursue," to which our highest contemplative poet, Wordsworth, so often returns, we cannot—if we would measure its significance—liken to the submission that Cleanthes expressed, and Symonds has faithfully rendered. Somehow, it is informed, it is penetrated by the Christianity which was in the air when Marius lived; there is a heart-felt yearning in its accents, an aspiration, mournful and low-voiced, to One who can hear and answer.

The book is a transparent disguise. We have no memorials of Mr. Pater, and to enlarge upon "his private virtues, the personal charm of his character, the devotion of his family life," will be, as we trust, the pleasant duty hereafter of Mr. Shadwell, from whose feeling Preface to the "Greek Studies" we have taken these words, or of one as well acquainted with the subject of them. But, in "Marius," we cannot fail to remark suggestive passages, epithets and axioms, which the author has made his own elsewhere. It is lyric and subjective. Is it also a recantation? Did Pater intend to tell us in his subdued way that he had exchanged the religion of sense for that of the spirit, "ideal form" leading on," as in Wordsworth's poetry, to "recognition of transcendent power"? There was need, if we may judge a doctrine by its popular

consequences. A man of genius, undoubtedly ; with narrow but intense eyesight ; not unlike the master whom he followed, Gabriel Rossetti, in his self-centred style ; slow to produce, but the outcome imperishable as sculptured marble ; a recluse busy with his own thoughts, unwearied in rejection till the fit word shaped itself before him, Walter Pater does not leave us questioning, as did J. A. Symonds, whether he will survive, He has written "ut studiis se litterarum a mortalitate vindicet." Who knows whether he may not have succeeded ? More than one of his pages deserve to endure while English is spoken or studied. "What care for style !" we may quote from himself, "what patience of execution ! What stately and regular word-building !" His manner has nothing of the rhetorician. He never flows ; the words, fixed and tranquil, look at you from a polished surface that hangs, like a picture in a gallery, always in its place, framed round about with gold. The current which makes music as it ripples along is an exact antithesis to this firm, large drawing which stays, whether you come or go, and has no motion.

For neither does the eye contemplating desire the landscape to move on ; and Pater, by temperament and theory, is absorbed in the moment. He cannot tell what went before ;—will anything come after ? He does not know. "To see the object as in itself it really is," he acknowledges for the aim of criticism ; but, he goes on to say, this means knowing "one's own impression as it really is." And the reason is plain to him : we can never know anything else. What effect does this song or picture, this engaging personality in life or a book, produce on me ? Does it give me pleasure ? If so, what degree or kind of pleasure ? Such are the questions which an esthetic temperament will put to itself. More it need not inquire—not the relation of "engaging" objects to truth, experience, morality. When it has defined beauty "in the most concrete terms possible"—when, as an exquisite amateur, it strives always "*à connaître de près les belles choses et à s'en nourrir*," it has fulfilled the whole duty of man as an artist. For, says the last solemn sentence in that book on the Renaissance, "Art comes to you

proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake." All is impression, sensation,—“a certain refined voluptuousness they have in them,” observes Pater of the “great lords and erudite persons” for whom Ronsard composes. “Experience is ringed round for each one of us,” he says again, “by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced.” We may give our impressions a pleasurable tone, if we know how; but to make them vehicles of the “not ourselves,” be it righteous or unrighteous? Impossible! “This, at least, of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence”—mark, we say, how absolute the knave is!—“renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.” They meet, they part; the man is made by their concurrence; he runs down into zero when they dissolve.

Whoever wrote these words was assuredly a Pagan, and not of the highest. How can we arrive at stable realities in that “race of the midstream,” and “drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought”? We never can, but a sort of answer is given by Epicurus, the philosopher of the dizzy whirlpool. *Carpe diem*, he says; fill the moment with as much pleasure as it will hold. For this purpose all periods and types may be equal, provided they yield the pleasurable sensations of which Humanists are in quest. “A refined and comely decadence” will have its place, side by side with the high exacting literatures, the severe philosophies, the works of art which, in their purity of perfect light, seem to reveal a world wherein decadence cannot enter. Even “the imagery of death serves for delicate ornament,” just as “the grotesque details of the charnel-house nest themselves, together with birds and flowers,” in the traceries of some medieval architecture. And so, too, metaphysics may lend a hand to this kind of training, at once esthetic and human, “not by the fancied gift of absolute or transcendental knowledge”—no; but by helping one to “detect the passion and strangeness and dramatic contrasts of life,” always as an exquisite amateur!

The Renaissance, thus set over against all forms of the

spiritual, derives its sweetness, we are assured, from the classic world. "Sweetness," here, and, in another place, "the highest quality," are given to our moments as they fleet, not by heroic conduct or transcendent moral choice, but by means of the works and affections proper to art as such. We have now, therefore, pretty well reversed the beliefs which were current among the orthodox. It used to be taken for granted that sweetness, or humanity, issuing in pity, forbearance, gentleness of demeanour, was, if not utterly the creation of the New Testament, at all events its chief and most gracious commendation. But perhaps a "languid excess of sweetness" may not be quite the same thing as humanity. Certain it is that to ascribe self-control or true affection to the hard, sensuous, showy men of letters or of the studio with whom we associate the Renaissance, would be much like attributing to physical science, as Symonds has done, "an extension of the province of love." On the margin of the page where we read this astounding sentence, a pencil has traced the single word "vivisection." Yes, we had better pause ere we fly to the science of phenomena for the golden rule. And the "sweetness" of sonneteers, poetasters, courtiers in the train of Nicholas V., or Francis I., or Cæsar Borgia is, to apply one of Symonds's apt criticisms, a "specious shape that catches the eye but has no life." Such "sweetness" had Ludovico Sforza, who murdered his young nephew by slow poison, but was "so susceptible of religious impressions," Pater gravely observes, "that he blended earthly passion" with sentiments of piety. No wonder if he took for his crest the mulberry tree, which yields flowers and fruits together! The example is by no means a solitary one. At this moment we are witnessing among French men of letters a "refined and comely decadence," which invites religion to the banquet where self-indulgence has exhausted the bill of fare. Symonds, in rending himself with sharp words, which he often did, talks of the "putrescence in his own soul." Not a little of it came from the inversion of means and ends which is a consequence when Hedonism shuts man up within the cell-walls of feeling. With all the resources of intoxication, these new-born gods

cannot hold out; their diaries and poems abound in "the sunless pleasures of weary people," and their artificial, composite existence passes into stage-play.

Hence their fellow-feeling with ages of decline; their preference of the later Greeks to Homer—of Theocritus and the "Anthology" to Sophocles or Æschylus; their admiration, which the mild-voiced Stevenson called merely quaint, of Tiberius and his dilettantism; their recurring elegies; and their melancholy. "This Pagan sentiment," we grant in the author's language, does "measure the sadness with which the human mind is filled, whenever its thoughts wander far from what is here and now," supposing it has no intuitions of the Divine. Our Humanist would fain linger "at home on the earth for ever, if he could." And yet he must go; Nature says to him, "*Lusisti satis, tempus abire.*" Death is in the cup which he puts to his lips; it infects his writing with a macabre taint. "The soul with all its maladies" makes of him an invalid. Ronsard's poetry is for the old who were young but yesterday; the supreme Hellenic culture itself is "a sharp edge of light across the gloom." How deceptive a Renaissance, which promised eternal youth, and behold the roses are falling from its chaplet! Shall we apologise for it by saying with Pater that "ennui attaches even to the realisation of the perfect life"? This is neither sense nor philosophy, but it is a strong argument against Paganism.

And he felt it so, and passed on, through contradictions, with a faltering step, by the way of romance, or of the mystic, into a region which, when he wrote his original essays, he had not explored. "That sinister claim for liberty of the heart and of thought,"—Antinomian, rebellious, yet more than just if his famous epilogue (published, withdrawn, and printed again) to this volume may stand unerased,—that plea for boundless self-indulgence so long as it is pleasurable, must at length be given up. "Get as many pulsations as possible into the time," he had said,—a doctrine fatal to men. Now, in the person of his self-denying Marius, he modulates into a higher key. There is a scale of pleasures. At one end we see the Roman multitude gaping with monstrous emotion as the sand drinks up the blood of their gladiators;

at the other. Christian youths and maidens throw away their lives joyously, in the amphitheatre at Lyons or Vienne, finding a happiness in dying for their Master. On which side is the pretended Epicurean? Is he but doing homage to his fine taste, not his conscience, when the Colosseum rings with a cry for blood and he will not echo it? No, he looks at the indifferent Emperor, sitting there unmoved, and from that hour he cannot praise the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius except with a frigid or an angry brow; he is almost unfair to the man,—a philosopher, not human but merely ascetic! "Vale, anima infelicissima!" murmurs the indignant youth, as he turns from the Palatine to pursue a journey which will lead him down, through the house of Cecilia, to the Catacombs. He wanders on, by the path of enthusiasm for his brethren, the new faith already throwing a gleam over his pallid features, to the martyrdom for which his life had been a preparation. His scale of pleasures will never allow him to sadden a living thing; his eyes are forbidden to look with delight upon anguish or the unclean.

Remarkable enough! Our most unbelieving century, as Von Hartmann defines it, cannot have done with Religion; whether it paints, or sings, or argues, in its discussions on the price of bread and a fair wage, to the question of questions it must return. Symonds, we are told by his admiring friend in the "Biography," had one "dominating pursuit,—the interrogation of the Universe, the search for God." He flung from him with disgust the "smugness of Agnosticism." Were men satisfied to be Atheists, the melodious dithyrambs of Mr. Swinburne would never have attracted or provoked them. And here is the lover of fair aspects, to whom inquiries beyond the passing delectation should seem as aimless as impertinent, pencilling, in a series of delicate scenes and groupings, what a medieval saint has described as the "*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*." The interest we feel in Marius centres round this problem. He is a born heathen, but temperate, steady, abounding in the milk of human kindness, who, from the outset, has a deep sense of responsibility towards the world of men and things, and is gentle and unselfish. By what steps shall such

a one arrive at the new discipline, which is taking hold everywhere of men "in whom God is well pleased"? That he learns while still a boy, in a retreat, or Pagan monastery, where he has for his director a young priest of *Æsculapius*; and the rule runs, "Thou shalt be made perfect by love of visible beauty." We have come again to the heart of esthetics. How is the Fair likewise the Good?

Not this story alone, but his "Lectures on Plato" and his "Greek Studies" prove how constantly the writer was busying himself—surely because in some degree perplexed—with the riddle of which art, philosophy, religion propound their several solutions. Without the sensible, no interest for man; he must be kindled by feeling, or remains a statue blind and dumb. Nevertheless, sense consumes the spirit, and at last blots out every trace of humanity from the countenance. Shall we, then, take our flight to the abstract? deny sense, and live a Spartan life, untouched by these singeing flames? That is to die ere our prime, or never to have lived at all. Sparta was a monastery, cloistral, severe; but not the "eye of Greece, mother of arts." Hence, also, "amateurs everywhere of the virile element in life, the Lacedæmonians impart to all things an intellectual character"; they worship the Practical Reason, not routine. But they remain hard and unsympathetic,—even Euripides, though he draws their pattern youth in *Hippolytus*, calls them "hateful to all men." Nor did the Renaissance, steeped in fire and passion, which Pater adorned with his arabesques of chosen words, find much to imitate among the Lyncurgans. Yet we now seem invited to believe, that since it was the design of such training to promote "honour, friendship, loyalty to the past," and since it ended in making each man "himself a work of art," more exquisite than dead marbles or Sophoclean tragedies, why, this will be Marius the Epicurean. At all events, we say that he will not be Filelfo, Beccadelli, Aretino,—he stands before us self-discipline personified, not self-indulgence crowned with fading blossoms.

Marius would have finely puzzled the Christian apologist of days not so critical as our own, entangling him like a retiarius in network which his leaden sword would in vain have attempted to cleave, and that by no argument save

the story of his bringing up. Now we perceive that the true preparation of the Gospel was in such lives. Had the old religions of heathendom been utterly vile ; had not grave and touching inspirations lurked in the Roman country festivals, rude as they were, in the silence and the ceremonies about the rustic altar, in those brotherhoods, Pythagorean, Æsculapian, which laid a rule upon their adherents, strict, if not always observed ; had the "most religious city in the world" never been lit up by that divine radiance, clear, and as if pensive with a personal feeling, that in Virgil subdues while it melts the reader, and is touched to devoutest issues, where could the message of prophets and preachers awake those slumbering echoes which in time gave back so mighty a sound ? The fierce Montanist—a Puritan "before the letter"—would have pulled down and broken in pieces all that he deemed hostile to his creed. Happily, a larger spirit, Roman but Papal, curbed the iconoclast. No breach so violent as that which opened a gulf between modern and medieval,—to our loss, we are assured by the wisest,—divided man from himself when, taking in his hand the lovely flowers of poetry and ritual, the lights which had burned before ancient shrines, and the sweet-smelling incense, he came into the holy place which all these were to adorn. In the lifelong wanderings of Marius there is not one pearl of price, one element holding of the beautiful, that he is told to cast away on entering the Christian temple. Dimly, without grasping the profound principle of an order in things, which made so strong an impression upon Augustine—who was thereby enabled to escape the Manichean argument, and to distinguish between self-culture and surrender to impulse—Marius learns to refrain, but the end is that he may enjoy according to right reason.

His heart opens whenever the "influences of the beautiful" are poured abroad ; yet he can be stern with himself ; his eyes shall look on nothing base, the body shall be dedicated to health and purity ; "unseen moralities" stand behind the symbolism that gives him content. His home at White Nights, and the memory of a noble mother, keep him "serious amid fopperies and languid days." Already, some new word is wanting to express the spirit

in which he contemplates existence ; if he is not a "spiritual man," he dwells in the shade, *umbratilis* ; and his aloofness from the crowd, his freedom while pursuing the mimic rivalries of school and fashion, make him a spectator when he might be an actor wholly absorbed in the world's services. The temptation of youth is to spread itself out in sunshine, wasting and wasted ; to say with most Epicureans, "Let no flower of the spring pass by us." Not so this careful appraiser of the value of things. He marks in his first-loved schoolmate, Flavian, "as it were an epitome of the Pagan world,—its depth of corruption, its perfection of form," and he turns away, distressed, with a condemnation which is heightened by after-knowledge of Christians like Cornelius. Fortune brings him across the "Golden Book," in which we read that consummately perfect legend, "where more is meant than meets the ear," of Cupid and Psyche. To him it is a romance, not so much because it tells in dainty Latin how "the course of true love did never run smooth," as by its mystic passion, full of awe and tenderness ;—such a god was he whom Dante beheld, "the Lord of terrible aspect," not a child playing with fire-tipped arrows. The dedication to things beautiful must henceforward take into its scheme grief and trial ; without them no perfect life is conceivable. Thus, in spite of the unhandsome stains that defile Apuleius, a fair soul knows how to derive its proper nourishment from pages too often, like those of Boccaccio, better left in their dust.

Still, when Flavian dies, the young philosopher, who had been writing down at his dictation a chant of love and life, the "Pervigilium Veneris," can no longer hope. That friend, he mused in the Lucretian vein, "had gone out as utterly as the fire among those beloved ashes." Heraclitus, not Socrates, reasoned well. Things are in a perpetual flux ; if the moment be not its own end, there is no other. But the conclusion, then ? Aristippus gives it. Fall back on direct sensation ; the blue sky is overhead, "let us eat and drink." Only we have still a choice in our eating and drinking ; the "sight of perfect men and things" may be a kind of religion. It is the philosophy under whose influence Pater composed his first writings. How the bowman can shoot to any purpose without a mark,

and whether, if there must be an aim in our action, the flux itself may not have a tendency,—a law of direction,—and so, at last, a reason which will account for it, the author was still to investigate. He has taken some steps towards this view, though not reaching it exactly. “You may always pit form against force,” said Mr. Ruskin with admirable precision. Form is order, and means stability, the constant which Marius was ever seeking. The law of the Beautiful goes beyond sense: it is in the mind, not in mere sight. Here is our first answer to the enigma.

But order, though excellent, is impersonal; it will not suffice. The Stoic who ruled mankind, as in some weary service of the gods not answering him, Aurelius, believed in law and order, wrote “Meditations” on the “city builded in the heavens”; he was a prey to melancholy, though exclaiming almost in Hamlet’s famous words, “’Tis in thy power to think as thou wilt.” So he deluded himself, being all the while “a comfortless shadow,” eaten up with sadness. Where was the city to which he belonged? It was not Rome. Marius began to look round for it; his early self-contained existence he would now gladly merge, though not confound, in the brotherhood of man. So much he had learnt in the lectures delivered by his Imperial master. But something more was needed. Fronto, like a second-century Rousseau at court, enlarged on the old moralities as recommended by their charm to sweetly-sensible persons, unable to believe in dogma. We can assent to them, he said, and we ought, as a matter of breeding. His meditative listener concludes that the will, even where beliefs are concerned, may shape the deed; will is, perhaps, vision, he argues. These fresh and determining elements had no place in the philosophy of Aristippus. They bind past and future; they speak, not obscurely, of a communion in which men’s thoughts flow to and fro, even as we all breathe one vital air. And the great system existed before Marius; it will survive him; it is in “impregnable possession” of the world. After all, the lonely monad which he took himself to be was an idle dream; he is not solitary.

With the new acceptance of a world outside, comes Apuleius, whom he meets at dinner in a friend’s house,

situate on pleasant Tusculum,—comes and would transform the Platonic “ideas” into “powers” demonic; a suggestion his old admirer does not embrace, yet will leave open as he begins to see infinite possibilities beyond the Heraclitean moment. What he longs for is to experience the Divine; as that mystical outcry renders it, “O amare, O ire, O ad Deum pervenire!” And has he not, all along, had an unseen companion? With Hippolytus he might say to the deity, “Thy voice is sweet in mine ears, yet never have I looked upon thy face”; there is, then, an unknown Eros. The crisis which these stirrings of the heart betokened was upon him. He sees the Christian Liturgy; hears the prophesyings of a time that is to be; recognises how those common things, bread and wine and oil, the substance of every day, may be lifted up till they become heavenly mysteries. In a vivid and touching scene—the nearest approach to artistic vision which the book contains—he is present while the disciples set forth, according to the ritual of the Church, their beliefs, their unity, their worship of One who is not far from them. “All that was deep-felt and impassioned in the experiences of the past” was here summed up and realised, but in a living figure. And Marius knew that he should require no less than this from the powers which had brought him into the world, if happiness were not to be denied him for ever. His biographer hears the great hymn of the Middle Ages already lifted up:—

Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui,
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui.

The Christ has overcome.

We are a long way from the Renaissance. Here is, indeed, a soul worn out with travail, but willing to give up the vulgar delusions, and be at peace. He has turned completely round, if we view him now and in the days when he thought of making the hours yield their utmost, “by dexterous training of capacity.” This perfect sight which he has seen is a prelude to the tragedies, beautiful if the eye that studies them be enlightened, but clouded with shame and horror, of which the “Acta Martyrum”

will hold a record. He, too, is set down for his part. By accident, in a popular tumult, away from Rome, he and his Christian friend, the Centurion, are arrested. He so contrives that the other shall escape; is himself roughly handled, taken for one of the new sectaries, released in a state of high fever, and left among Christians. And he dies with their Sacrament on his lips, their prayers murmuring in his ears. It is a good end. He does not complain. Surely, he says with a sense of gratitude, life has been with him a success. Now, the unknown is not terrifying. "The unclouded and receptive soul was quitting the world finally," with fresh wonder as when it began its course, and if still with a conviction of the profound enigma in things, yet taking this for "a pledge of something further to come." Marius, we may conclude as did his tender brethren, fell asleep like one that hopes. He had but passed through the veil, from the seen to the unseen, from time to the eternal.

Grace and charm, assuredly, are not lacking to this delineation of a "soul naturally Christian." The manner, we allow, has caught some of Apuleius' gold thread in its tangles, and is not unaffected. A sentence up and down the ornate pages leads us to suspect that Marius, if he had fallen under the spell of a strong personality,—which he never did,—might have lost his "remarkable self-possession." He was at no turning in life severely tempted; he came to the new doctrines not like a penitent convicted of sin, but with an unsullied past. Still, he is sympathetic, humble, almost, we had said, contrite. Any one less resembling the decadent Humanist it would be hard to imagine. And herein lies the moral of this whole story—of the esthetic movement also, and the two distinguished writers whom we have taken to body it forth, "in the most concrete manner possible," that we might not go astray while judging of its principles.

That movement, then, like the Renaissance, which, on a limited scale, it has striven to imitate, will be sketched in a phrase, if we call it the false Platonism. When Symonds sat up all night to read the "Phædrus" and the "Symposium," finding there a revelation for which his heart thirsted, we may be certain that he dwelt

rather upon the visible aspects which to Plato are only the beginning of wisdom, than transcended them and rose into the "kingdom of ideals." In like manner, it is Aristippus, not the forerunners of Plotinus, who lays his enchantments upon Marius the Epicurean. All these are in love with the outward sign, not the inward grace. And of each it must be said until they change, "*Dilexit vanitatem.*" They sacrifice the Good to the Beautiful; that is Hedonism, in literature as in life. To the form they sacrifice the substance; that, in moderation, is the prettiness of Euphues; in excess, it is Decadence. If thought be one element in all true art, and technique another, to them technique is the sole object, thought may be wanting. In a word, they are dominated by impressions, by music which intoxicates, by scents and savours which leave them spell-bound, by sensuous delight in which reflection has no place. They reverse the order, and pervert the intentions, of Nature. For this is the order established in things, that feeling shall serve faculty, faculty shall go forth into action, action build up character in a world of self-determining individuals whom the Law of Reason guides to their end. The outward show is an occasion, not an adequate cause, nor an effect in which we should rest wholly. And who are the supreme artists save those that paint, and carve, and sing with their minds open to a world of Divine exemplars, not to be simply given back in lines or contours, in colours or sounds, or in any earthly vehicle, but to be hinted at, suggested by imperfect devices, and, so to speak, called up in the remembrance of their fellows, not exhausted in a solid something, complete where it stands? Such is the doctrine of the "*Phædrus*" as expounded in a glorious parable by Socrates, according to whom the idea of a scale, of progression and ethic choice, alone will deliver the human soul from perishing with the beauty which has ensnared it.

And the latest experience, startling as with a thunder-clap our languid society, bears out his warning. If feeling, so long as it is pleasurable, remains artistically just and true, there is no perversion too monstrous for some school or other of virtuosi and exquisite amateurs to find delight in its cultivation. What are the fruits

of that philosophy? The desideratum, at last, will be 'strangeness,'—the artificial, the high-spiced,—imagination feeding on the forbidden. Not the scale of Idealism, but the demands of intellectual sensuousness, will give to objects a value and an interest. And whither can such an 'inclined plane' lead? Self-respecting heathen would not have borne to be under the same roof with the pattern Humanists who degraded literature, and achieved the decadence of Italy, four hundred years ago. Would they be more tolerant of unhappy moderns, fashioned according to the maxims with which Symonds, or Pater, set out? Let the reader compare such sentences as we have quoted from them with classic lines and grave reflections in the tragedians, in Plato himself,—in Aristotle, who has laid down the only true, because the only reasonable, doctrine of aims and actions;—in all to whom the Cyrenaic adornment of the cup and the platter, filled as they were with uncleanness, seemed, long ere the light of Christianity arose, detestable and inhuman. Culture without principle is a wrecker's light. Dilettantism, regardless of ethics, that is to say, of the something which makes us human, turns the finest knowledge, and the natural desire of man to embellish and sweeten existence, into a subtle poison,—“art after art goes out, and all is night.” Had there been no Pagan Renaissance, Europe might have spared itself a Puritan Reformation. The men who despised religion ruined art, and were made an excuse for banishing innocent joy.

The same danger, and a not unlike dilemma, threaten now. It cannot be denied that shallow young men, whose acquaintance with Greek and Latin would not bear half an hour's examination, and whose passion for the fine arts is obviously affected, have learnt their false Platonism from teachers no less cultivated than Symonds, as reserved in style as Pater. The stream of tendency has caught them; not a few are drifting downwards,—some have been already swept away. They begin with Aristippus; they end as Leopardi ended: the next world fades into darkness, lighted by no sun or star. Most miserable of all, the sacred name of friendship is profaned on the abused authority of Plato; and a savour of death lurks in the

most unselfish of relations, now disengaged from its human and ethical meaning. Yet Plato has warned them repeatedly, in words not unbecoming a Hebrew prophet—"Ut quid diligitis vanitatem, et quæritis mendacium?"—that the penalty of mistaken ends is ruin. We may number some of its consequences as we turn the leaves of this "*Dichtung und Wahrheit*." They are moral relaxation, effeminacy, sickly self-consciousness, morbid tastes, *tædium vitæ*; the hope of annihilation which had rather die than live; complete dissolution of soul; "moments" only, not even the "states" which Materialism would grant,—how much less energy, or sovereign self-direction according to the moral law, or life everlasting!

And yet, these two famous Humanists have recanted: the one by casting literature and art from him as inferior to the meanest action; the other by leading his Cyrenian youth along paths of sympathy and self-denial, into the communion of saints and martyrs. The final verdict, which, however, was not given until, by preaching culture as a religion, they had stirred up the uncultivated to denounce even legitimate art, is that which our reason and faith have recognised. Men are still encouraged "to live in the Whole, to practise the Good, to delight in the Beautiful." Yes, but it needed no Goethe, if we knew our Augustine, to come from Weimar and teach us that. Rather, it was needful to understand this great sentence truly,—not to imagine the Whole a perpetual flux with none guiding it; or the Good an impossible sum of pleasurable sensations; or the Beautiful that which steeped the eyes and heart in dainty feeling, but had no message beyond itself. Though we cannot but experience a pang when the ice-cold pages of his "*Autobiography*" tell us how one of these men failed to find happiness, nor can help rejoicing when the other, in his romance, seems to have discovered an escape into the light, still it is melancholy to remember how many have followed them along slippery paths, not turning back when they turned, but going on, like Hippolytus, towards the great deep, unlike Hippolytus, not innocent. For, as Socrates told them long ago, the way is nothing worth, and the end destruction.

XI

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE¹

SOMEWHERE about the year 1716, so runs the story, a Polish gentleman belonging to the noble house of Nietzsche was condemned to death for having conspired as a Protestant, with other Protestants, against the Republic. He made his escape, with wife and child, into German territory. Of him nothing more is known; and even these details may be little else than a legend. But Friedrich Nietzsche, whose life and opinions we are proposing to narrate, was proud of his Polish origin; nor did his restless, brilliant, self-centred, and unmanageable character, which at last broke down into madness, belie the affinities whereby we are led to think, if not, as he would persuade us, of Copernicus, yet certainly of Chopin. He is the latest, and by no means the least significant, of those spirits that, like the too often quoted Mephistopheles, "say No" to an entire civilisation. His *Nie pozwalam*, or "I decline to agree," uttered with explosive rhetoric, and flowing out into ten thousand aphorisms, has made him the hero as well as the prophet of free-thinkers. To him the Church seems an effete superstition, the State mere tyranny, metaphysics the ghost of religion sitting upon its grave, morality a bugbear, law the enemy of life, and everything permissible so long as men please themselves.

This Great Charter, drawn in outline more than half a century ago by Max Stirner,—whom Dr. Nordau brushes aside as a "crazy Hegelian,"—finds in Nietzsche

¹ "Das Leben F. Nietzsche's." Von seiner Schwester. Leipzig, 1895. "Die Werke F. Nietzsche's. Eight Vols. Leipzig, 1896. "Thus Spake Zarathustra." Translated by Dr. Tille. London, 1896. "The Case of Wagner," etc. Translated by Thos. Common. London, 1896. "Der Einzige und sein' Eigenthum." Von Max Stirner. Zweite Auflage. Leipzig, 1882. And many other Works.

such a wealth of light and colour—it is proclaimed with so sweeping an eloquence, and, we must add, with such “damnable iteration”—that none can marvel if the anarchists of all nations flock to his standard. What, in comparison with his laughing, singing, and dancing strophes are the pale arguments of a Max Stirner, the rants and furies of Bakunin, the geographical lectures and moral-revolutionary pleadings of Prince Kropotkin, or the halting deductions of Mr. Herbert Spencer? And in the deep gloom which hangs over Nietzsche, in his wanderings of the mind and the feet through so many high and wild landscapes, in the pathos of contrast suggested by his early and his latter years, in his condition of insanity without hope, while his books were sumptuously edited, carefully translated, and studied from New York to St. Petersburg, all the elements of tragedy are mingled.

Those who suffer persecution for a creed will naturally be drawn to preach it; the family of the Polish fugitive, established on a peaceful soil, dedicated themselves to the service of the Lutheran Church. Friedrich, the grandfather of our anarchist, born at Bibra in 1756, was Pastor of Wollmirstadt in Thuringia, Doctor of Divinity, and Superintendent at Eilenburg. He published Sermons, vindicated the Second Epistle of St. Peter against Grotius, offered a “Rational View of Religion, Education, Loyalty, and Benevolence” to those whom the “present excitement in the world of theology” seemed likely to trouble; and, dying at the age of seventy, left behind him the reputation of a worthy and learned parson. He was twice married, and had ten children. His second wife, sister of Dr. Krause and widow of Superintendent Krüger, exercised no small influence over the household in which young Friedrich grew up at Naumburg on the Saale. Like all his kinsfolk, she was sincerely religious, but in the somewhat light-tempered fashion which dwelt more upon making the world happy than upon her neighbours’ sinfulness. Two of her sons became clergymen; Karl Ludwig, the father of that boy who was to bring his Lutheran ancestors so much fame and shame, not only distinguished himself in his University course at Halle, but while quite a young man was appointed as tutor

of the Princesses of Sachsen-Altenburg, one of whom afterwards became Grand Duchess of Oldenburg, and a second Grand Duchess Constantine of Russia. In 1841, when Ludwig was not yet thirty, he had gained the friendship as well as the personal acquaintance of his Sovereign, Frederick William IV., whose religious mysticism agreed in large measure with his own. The King gave him an excellent living at Röcken, a pleasant village, standing with its ivy-clad church-tower in a country of wood and water, not far from Lützen. There Friedrich was born, to his father's great joy, on the King's birthday, October 15th, 1844. He received the pious monarch's name; and the event is recorded with trembling gratitude in the pastor's baptismal register. What would have been that good man's feeling, had some unpytting genius shown him in vision the pages of "Zarathustra," which this child, whom he was dedicating with such solemn words, was destined one day to publish!

But he foresaw no evil, and died when Friedrich was not five years old. Meeting with a bad accident, by falling down a flight of steps, he underwent an illness which lasted some eleven months and terminated in softening of the brain. It does not appear, from the minute details given of her family by Madame Förster-Nietzsche, to whom we owe our knowledge, that there was any taint of unsoundness in the blood; neither would the copious early writings in prose and verse of Nietzsche himself, or his first published compositions, lead us to suspect in him congenital derangement of intellect. Young as he was, he felt deeply both his father's death and the change from Röcken, to which he was always attached,—from a country village, with its freedom and fresh air, to the rather melancholy streets of Naumburg. And in accordance with his grandmother's theory of education, he attended the common school and mixed with the town-children,—an ordeal which this highly-sensitive, perhaps over-refined spirit could not endure.

At first he made no friends, and was too earnest for his years. The boys called him "little clergyman"; they took home stories of his extraordinary acquaintance with the Bible, and how he recited hymns that made them cry.

Later on, his comrades made a hero of Friedrich ; his sister worshipped him ; and her recollections of his skill in amusements at home, his fantasies and fairy tales, his enthusiasm for the Russians during the Crimean War, his Homeric studies which infected all around, and his anxiety to understand as well as practise the religious principles taught him, furnish us with a child's biography, not very deep or philosophical, but pleasing and true. It is the old German home, with some added polish and an almost artistic clearness of feature, charming us by its combination of the picturesque and the natural. These two were pattern children, bred in the atmosphere of Lutheran piety, spending their holidays with a clerical grandfather in his country-living of Pobles, or with a clerical uncle at Nirmsdorf, sheltered from the world by aunts and other feminine kindred, who might sometimes read the newspapers but were zealous for converting the heathen. They heard of Berlin, and studied the shop windows in Leipzig ; but they "feared no evil, for they knew no sin." When the grandmother passed away, they moved into a smaller house, which had its old-fashioned garden to delight these old-fashioned little people ; and Fritz, enamoured of music and verse-making, spent many hours in the arbour composing stanzas, some of which betray remarkable perfection of form, and a truth of emotion that is exceedingly rare in boys of twelve or thirteen. The fragments of autobiography which have been preserved from the same period are still more striking. Not only does the lad write with judgment and sense when to write at all would have been an uncommon merit,—he looks before and after, knits up his literary enterprises into a whole, and displays a gift of introspection such as Goethe himself might have envied at that premature age.

So promising a student was not likely to be overlooked ; and in 1858 the Rector of the Land-School at Pforta gave Fritz a scholarship in that famous institution. The history of Pforta would be worth telling, had we space to describe its vicissitudes. Certain monks of the Order of St. Bernard, Cistercians, driven out by the heathen Slavs in the twelfth century, had taken refuge with Udo, Bishop of Naumburg, and founded their new monastery at Pforta in 1136,

“Cœnobium Stæ Mariæ de Porta.” By-and-by the Reformation came; and in 1543 Maurice, Duke of Saxony, putting out the old monks, made of it a public school. The lines of this change were quaintly described by Duke Maurice himself as early as 1540. “To the devout life,” says his instruction, “shall the lads be brought up; and in the art of speaking, in discipline, and in virtue shall they be instructed six years long”; in consideration of all which, “they shall be provided with masters and servants, teachers, living, and other necessities, *gratis*. If the school accept them, for six years shall they be entertained and taught, I say *gratis*, yet so that they appear apt to study.” Fritz Nietzsche was, if ever a lad of his age, “apt to study,” and he went to Pforta, “willing, with reluctant mind.” For he was shy, solitary, and a prey to home sickness.

Pforta had kept its walls, ten or twelve feet high; it was a vast enclosure of meadows watered by the Saale, and of buildings still severe and monastic in their grey old age. The discipline was strict, chapels frequent, studies austere. There were two hundred students, including twenty externs. Fritz spent his six years in learning the classics, for which he felt a lifelong enthusiasm; but he could make no way with mathematics, and his one other passion was music—luckily or unluckily for the European public which has read his judgments on Wagner with admiration, wrath, and perplexity. The passion for reserve and reverie grew in solitude; he lived on his weekly visit home; and he breathed out in verse that deep depression no anodyne for which was anywhere accessible to him. With school-friends he founded the society “Germania,” which, short-lived enough, gave him scope for the attempts in music and literature that he was ever making. Sometimes, thinking where he should travel during his holidays, he fell into strange dreams and travelled in his sleep; and once, thus roaming, as he thought, under comfortless vivid sunshine, there struck upon his ear a cry from the neighbouring asylum, which he records in a melancholy yet defiant tone. He did not foresee the future.

His school-days began to weary him; never could this intractable though modest-seeming temper submit to

routine; he hated the traditions as much as the advantages of the German scholar's life, long before he came to read Schopenhauer's diatribes against the University system. Neither was he impetuous in friendship, though attached and serviceable. He disliked the sentimental style; he soon drew back from societies in which his quite un-German love of pure air and his refined courtesy met with no satisfaction; he was thinking for himself, despite the almost military discipline under which he lived at Pforta. In many ways, now and later, we are reminded of the unhappy English genius and New-Pagan, John Addington Symonds, of whom we have written at length, and whom Nietzsche not a little resembled. Both were outwardly diffident, at heart self-sustained and intractable; in either the capacity for mental suffering, heightened by illness and introspection, gave a keen sense of what pleasure there might be in life, were health its normal condition; each luxuriated in music, yet was an imbecile in mathematics; and both combined an intense love of the Greek and Roman literature with the modern feeling for landscape, especially for the pictured shores of the Riviera, and high Alpine regions like the Engadine, in which they found a home. Both, finally, turning from metaphysics as delusion, convinced that religion, above all in its Christian form, was the ruin of art and the chief hindrance to man's advancement, devised in its stead an Epicurean stoicism, or rule of pleasure founded upon the mystery of pain, with the mortality of the soul to put a sting into it, and death as the great deliverance. We may now follow up the record of Nietzsche's youth and manhood, taking this clue to guide us.

From Pforta, where he had acquitted himself honourably, the scholar—he was already entitled to that name—passed at twenty, in 1864, to the University of Bonn. His last piece of school-work had been an essay upon Theognis of Megara, in which the old Greek moralist and tyrant was held up to admiration above the heads of the vile democracy, or regiment of slaves—for such to this haughty and disdainful mind did the civic constitution appear to be, whether in Athens or in Paris; by instinct he had already chosen his side, the unpopular, anti-Liberal,

and Napoleonic. The "strong lonely man," were he Peisistratus, Julius Cæsar, or Cæsar Borgia, had become his pattern of greatness; but years must elapse ere he could preach, to a generation intoxicated with "progress," the doctrine he was now bringing into light from ancient deeps of history in which, ever since Aristotle, it had lain forgotten. In discussing Theognis, however, Nietzsche did not aim at a theory of politics; seldom was he troubled with politics in the common use of the term; his ideal was perfection to be achieved by himself, first as freedom of intellect, then as an untrammelled self-directing life. He walked alone, and regarded no man. Yet this proud solitary could feel enthusiasm for his teachers, believing in them with passionate devotion, and offering them the incense of a rhetoric that flamed up in words most eloquent.

When he found himself at Bonn, learned in books, ignorant of the world as it lives and moves outside books, he was still boyish enough to take the German undergraduate seriously. He joined the "Franconia," fought his duel, contracted, as he says, "debts and rheumatism," and made an effort to combine his studies in philology with copious draughts of beer. In vain, however: yet a little while and he put the whole "Burschenschaft" from him as vulgar and Philistine. Nietzsche was not made to drink, smoke, or waste his substance in riotous living. He attempted even to reform the Franconians,—an essay which was repulsed with astonishment by these swaggering philosophers. And so he drew back into solitude again.

It must not be imagined from this hasty sketch that the youth whose daintiness of word and conduct we have insisted upon was that affliction to mankind a "superior person,"—Fritz had a natural fund of humour, and could laugh at his own conceits,—nor did he fail in comradeship, although the Kneipe was not his Paradise. That which was wanting to him at a critical moment was the authority of a teacher to whom he could look up. For now he had begun to vex himself with the problems of the New Testament and the Christian origins, supposing, as he said afterwards, that history—with the aid of the science

of language—could give a direct answer to questions of religion. During his first term, he was down for the lectures in divinity,—his interests as well as his associations seemed to fit him for the office and work of a clergyman, to which from boyhood he was drawn. But another spirit came upon him at Bonn. So far from desiring to be a pastor, he ceased, in fact, to be a Christian. His Evangelical training could make no stand against Bible criticism, as it was practised by the eminent men around him. And the familiar painful experience followed,—distress at home when his changed views were realised, a void in his own heart, the loneliness of life intensified, the past melting as into legendary mist, the future a blank. His two years at Bonn were, perhaps, the least comfortable he ever spent; but they marked the turning-point at which, forsaking the path of his ancestors, Nietzsche joined that throng of bewildered and disorderly pilgrims who have substituted inquiry for belief and become seekers after the unknown.

Leipzig, which was his next halting-place, attracted him by the fame of its Professors, Curtius, Dindorf, Ritschl, and Tischendorf, all of whom helped him to attain the minuteness of knowledge, if hardly the breadth of view, which he deemed requisite to a student of mankind. But his true master at Leipzig was none of these; it was the dead Schopenhauer, in whom, until a certain memorable day, he had not read one line. Finding the volumes at an old bookseller's, some demon, as he tells us, whispered to him, "Take them home"; he obeyed the warning, went back with them to the retired little house in a garden where he was then passing his quiet days, and throwing himself down on a sofa let the magician work his mighty spell upon him. Schopenhauer was a revelation, intimate, astonishing, personal, as if he had written for Nietzsche alone. "An energetic, gloomy genius," assuredly; and we may well believe that "every line which cried aloud of renunciation and self-denial" spoke to the tormented spirit; that "here, as in a looking-glass," or a prose-version of "Faust," he saw "the world, life, and his own mind in terrible majesty,"—"the sunlike-glance of art; sickness and healing; banishment and refuge; Heaven and Hell."

He began to despise, to chasten himself; his Diary abounded in sharp satire on his own weakness; he was nervous and ill, yet deprived himself of sleep, sitting up until two in the morning to rise again at six. How would all this have ended? It is his own question, and he answers, "Who can tell to what height of folly I should have ventured, had not vanity and the pressure of regular studies wrought in a contrary direction?"

He was not greatly in love with "regular studies." The famous professors, he judged, were by no means extraordinary men, but rather "Helots" of learning: Gibeonites who made a deal too much clamour about the wood they were condemned to hew and the water they were drawing for a temple which, to their dim vision, was out of sight. He describes Wilhelm Dindorf as a "powerful-looking man, with features like parchment, old-fashioned, and formal in his manners"; with keen, cautious eyes; a pessimist in principle, yet full of the "mercantile egoism" which led him to sell his critical conjectures in the dearest market, and drive hard bargains (be this a venial offence!) with English and German publishers. Nietzsche distrusted him, and would enter into no dealings with the man whose services to others he thought were little better than huntings on his own account. Tischendorf, his yet more renowned rival, who had examined and judged two hundred Greek manuscripts dating from before the ninth century—an achievement without parallel,—was "a small, rather bent figure, with fresh rosy cheeks and curly black hair," a study in character, much more complex than Dindorf, "cunning and diplomatic, fanatical, frivolous, ever so sharp-sighted in his own department, painfully exact in publication, vain beyond all bounds, greedy of gain, *defensor fidei*, a courtier, and a speculator in the book-market." Verily, as Nietzsche observes, "a versatile soul." He inspired students with his own passion for palæography, though pursuing no system; his lectures, again remarks the satirist, might have been dubbed "Tischendorf's Life and Experience." Nietzsche, however, followed them with steady enthusiasm. His "Theognis" had won the applause of Ritschl and Dindorf; he wrote on the "sources of Suidas" and the

“catalogues of Aristotle”; he was led by a happy chance to the question of the materials employed by Diogenes Laertius in his “Lives of the Philosophers.” All this sound and careful work may be taken as evidence that Nietzsche was no more threatened with insanity than any other Leipzig student. His larger views, derived from Schopenhauer and now moulding themselves in the aphoristic forms of Emerson, whom he thought a master of prose, though they troubled his imagination, did not throw him off his balance. So much is clear from letters and documents of this time. A change, indeed, was approaching; the first signal of which sent him, in 1867, to Naumburg in the uniform of a military conscript.

Nietzsche was a tall fellow, well set up, of the same height as Goethe, with dark earnest eyes, which German erudition had dimmed before their time. As learned men will do, he wore spectacles of a less powerful kind than befitted him; yet he had been exempted from service until the regulation was altered; and with glasses No. 8, the student of Suidas discovered that he must join the field-artillery. He could ride; it does not appear whether he could shoot. And Naumburg was his home. But admirably as he went about his fresh duties, there was, he could not help saying, something absurd in the sight of a cannoneer perched on a joint-stool in a barrack-room, and plunged in thoughts of Democritus. For that “great heathen” was now the subject of his classic reading. He was intent on “overcoming negation by negation,” the problem which, as a figure of black care, sits behind every horseman nowadays. He had promised his dying aunt Rosalie not to unsettle his sister’s religious convictions by talking about Schopenhauer. And the other artillerymen took no interest in Democritus or Attic inscriptions. An immense enterprise began to solicit him: the history of “studies in literature,” treated with philosophic largeness, or “the relation which learning bears to genius,”—to illustrate by a concrete example (perhaps the most striking one could suggest) what is the kinship, or the contrast, between men like Tischendorf and the writers of that New Testament with the Sinaitic recension of which Tischendorf’s name will be for ever associated? Nietzsche

held that it was the relation known to mathematicians as "inverse proportion." The scholar, the critic, the pedant,—types which he knew so well,—how dissect and explain them on the sombre world-system of Schopenhauer? The subject had its fascinations. But his artillery-horse was neighing for him; and in suddenly leaping on that fiery beast, the philosopher met with an accident that nearly cost him his life. He had injured two muscles of the chest; fever ensued, an operation seemed necessary; and though the wound healed, after five months of suffering, without aid from the knife, military service was, for the present, at an end. Nietzsche enjoyed half a year's respite from duty; he was "alone with himself." In this interval he was busy with the considerations which divorced him from what may be called the German fanaticism of philology, as a similar period at Bonn had seen him break his moorings and leave the orthodox creed behind him. Now, too, he made Wagner's acquaintance. And at Christmas, 1868, to the joy and wonder of his home-circle, Fritz, who was only just turned twenty-four, learned that, thanks to Ritschl, he had been appointed Professor of Classical Philology at Basle. The distinction flattered him, though the accompanying stipend was Spartan, not exceeding £120 a year—an income which his aunt Rosalie's legacy enabled him to round off somewhat more to his liking.

Here the story in detail of Nietzsche's life may be suspended. Henceforward, our judgment of the man need not depend on brief and fragmentary records; from the year 1869 his compositions were almost unbroken, though the first, which is a key to all that followed, did not appear until 1872. It was called "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music." In a preface subsequently published, the author, whose style had in the meantime undergone a complete transformation, bids us observe that "behind this questionable book lay a problem of the first rank and enticement, but likewise a deep personal interest." While, he continues, the thunder of the battle of Wörth went echoing over Europe, there sat in an Alpine nook, sorely perplexed and puzzled, an enigmatical person who was anxious to write down his

thoughts concerning the old Greeks. Not many weeks later, he found himself under the walls of Metz, still plagued with the note of interrogation which he had set against Hellenic "blitheness" (*Heiterkeit*) and its true relation to the art of the Greeks. At length, in that month so full of suspense, when peace was being debated, he too found a sort of peace; and during his long convalescence from an illness contracted in the French campaigns, he saw ancient Tragedy rising out of the genius of Music. Had then the Greeks need of tragedy? he asked,—they, the sprightliest race under heaven, need of anguish and the burden of sorrow beneath which man sinks down into the deeps and is seen no more? Surely, here opens before us, he said, the problem which Schopenhauer has revealed to our modern consciousness,—the value of existence and the meaning of Pessimism. So it appeared to Nietzsche then; but sixteen years afterwards, in this very preface, he could say that it was the primary question of science itself upon which he had lighted.

For an English reader, probably the speediest way into this fine suggestive essay would be through Walter Pater's meditations on "Dionysus, the spiritual form of fire and dew," on the "Bacchanals" of Euripides, the myth of Demeter and Persephone, and the romantic elements—as he terms them—in Hellenic religion. But Nietzsche takes a grander sweep. Whether his conclusions will bear the weight which he has laid upon them, is a question for critics,—yet, assuredly, not for critics of the low and grovelling kind which crawls like the serpent on its belly and bites the dust of learning. It is highly significant that his great monumental work, "Thus spake Zarathustra," was in Nietzsche's plans but a prelude to one still greater, the title of which should be "Dionysus, a Philosophy of Eternal Recurrence." And while many have suspected that in his frequent prologues,—all so lively and graceful,—no less than during the process of manipulation by which he re-wrought his volumes,—this author was fond of antedating views and putting forward a consistency never attained by him, certain it is that in "The Birth of Tragedy" we may discern "that unbodied figure of the thought, which gave it surmised

shape." Nay, nor quite unbodied; there is much expressive delineation, if also the confusing influence of "premature, too green and sallow growths of life," which hindered the language of its clearness.

Nietzsche had, in this first attempt, copied the Romantic school—Heine, Wagner, and his prophet Schopenhauer. He revelled in imagery, and spoke as to the initiated, furnishing a curious contrast to that light and rapid movement which was afterwards to give his thoughts wings and to lift them into cloudless ether. His grasp of the whole Greek literature is masterly. But even more remarkable is the insight which leads him to deal with it as a symbol and expression of that complex world which we know as the life of the Greeks. He sees them in the presence of primeval Nature, struggling with the huge and terrible powers they were bound to tame if they would not perish. Profoundly observant of the recurring cycles in their civilisation, he goes beyond Pater and the folk-lore which is content to deduce the Eleusinian mysteries from corn and wine. He sees in them a philosophy encompassing all the mythologies;—Titans and Olympians; Dionysus the ecstatic deity, and the Dorian Apollo, lord of measure; he opposes to them Socrates the cool reasoner, the man of theory, with his crowd of disciples fed upon abstractions, who proved fatal to the unconscious Hellenic spirit, which had dreamt its noblest dreams, ay, and realised them in bronze and marble, in music and speech, in polity and action, before the age of Plato, destined as this too surely was to run down in decadence and bring forth Callimachus and the Alexandrians. It is a fruitful, far-reaching theme. We may boldly pronounce that it filled the mind and fired the imagination of this deep thinker, until its vastness proved too much for him. Neither, as we are compelled to maintain, did he resolve his problem aright; the fault, however, lay in those who taught him,—in Kant, in Schopenhauer, in the German philosophy which has set out from a suicidal Unreason rather than from fact and Aristotle. Let us honour the man whose eyes are open to so large a prospect, though he cannot draw the map of its pathways correctly, or guide us in our travelling

over it. The scope and meaning of Greek tragedy, which involves Greek religion and puts the most searching questions to philosophies old and new, can never be truly perceived except we take into account the point of sight whereat Nietzsche has placed us.

This "mystic Mænad soul," whose utterances challenged an attention they did not for some years win, was original rather in temperament than in theory, and most of all in manner. Transplanted from the still Lutheran air and climate, to which Pietism gave a warm touch, behold it shivering in the Nova Zembla where life was turned to ice under Kant's dreary disenchantments! Reason, made suddenly aware of its own impotence,—so Nietzsche felt,—would drive thoughtful men towards the wilderness in which, for example, Heinrich von Kleist had done himself to death. How could they learn resignation? Where find hope? Did any power exist more primitive than Reason, deeper down in the world's foundations, and, so to speak, aboriginal, beyond the predicates which, according to the shadowy teaching of Königsberg, man had laid upon the unknown and thereby taken the mirage for an authentic vision? Yes, beyond Reason there was life,—the Will, as Schopenhauer affirmed,—an ever-recurring instinct or effort towards existence, which, like some Ocean pouring out on all sides countless torrents and cataracts, rushed into the millions upon millions of individuals, and swept forward with them into the future. Not, indeed, as Shelley sings, "One spirit's plastic stress" compels these processions to take forms so lovely or so terrible;—"spirit," like "reason," which implies design, or at least system, is man's device, and the primal instinct remains for ever blind,—instinct signifies blindness. Yet we seem to observe an art in the world, tragic enough, since it must go down to Hades with ourselves whom it has enthralled and comforted. When we know this secret—the burden of all music, painting, speech, and song which bring us rest—we have no more to learn; sorrow passes into Nirvana, the denial of life familiar to ascetics Eastern and Western; "the wheel of Ixion stands still;" evil is overcome. Such was the doctrine borrowed from mystics

by the recluse of Frankfort to heal the despair which Kant's "Critique" had brought forth, by a more profound and yet poetical resignation! It is the merit of Nietzsche to have turned these sombre lights on the men of Hellas, over whose bright heaven the shadows might seem to pass like translucent clouds. Music meant so much to them; and all the soothing, elevating arts sprang out of it. To modern loungers at the play and the opera, what is tragedy but a sensation, or a stimulant which they take for its bitterness, and which, intellectually, is no more than a pastime? The Greek tragedy was infinitely more: did we term it even, in Goethe's well-worn phrase, the "Religion of Sorrow," its Prometheus and Ajax, its Antigone and Cassandra, its Œdipus upon whom all the griefs of the world had come, might bear us out. Was it not, however, from first to last, the service of Dionysus, beginning with those ecstatic dithyrambs in which the music overpowered the human syllables, and ending—for that was, truly, the end of it—with Euripides, the too domestic, argumentative, sentiment-mongering poet, who made his unavailing recantation in the "Bacchanals"?

What, then, was Dionysus? A power excelling the vine-spirit and far more ancient,—he was the "Will to live," that outrush of energy which, in creatures so impressionable as the Greeks, was at once motion and emotion,—frenzied music, surrender to impulse, ecstasy, as we have named it. The original tragedy is the Chorus. When the god appears, drama begins; and, as the interchange of choral worship develops into narrative, Apollo, with his measured iambics and art of reason, charms the wild rage until it is purified and brought under law. When reason degenerates into reasoning, when the myth and the chorus become a stage decoration for sophists to argue and wrangle in front of it, Dionysus vanishes away; it is an age of decline, and life sinks down to literature, make-believe, commonplace. Instead of heroic resignation, enter upon the stage commercial Optimism, bourgeois virtue, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, Epicurus or Bentham, and science as saving truth,—*"the Truth,"* in spite of all the Humes, Kants, and Berkeleys that ever proved its hollowness.

Such was the counterblast to modern civilisation wherewith Nietzsche began his career. With no uncertain sound he pleaded for life against abstractions; for the philosophical necessity of suffering against doctrines which would abolish pain and bring in a republic of all the pleasures; for facts against the pedantry of professors; and for a largeness of life that could not exist without perils encountered and tragedy in the sequence. He spoke, it is true, of resignation; but in his innermost soul he did not mean it. He was far from resigned. Had he been so, he would have kept silence in public, gone on with his "Democritus," and let the world wag. Instead of leading the *vita umbratilis* which befitted resignation, and was quite easy to him now at Basle, he put forward his "Unseasonable Reflections" on Strauss, Schopenhauer, and Wagner, on the abuse of History, and the delusions which went by the name of German culture.

We find in these essays a resemblance of substance no less than of form to Carlyle,—not the Carlyle who wrote Carlylese, and whose "Pessimism was an undigested dinner," as Nietzsche says, but the pensive troubled soul at Craigenputtock, whose thinking aloud is so persuasive and his modesty unfeigned. Nietzsche had the shy ways of genius when he began; his tone was impersonal, not arrogant, and there is an air of apology in his humour. But his arrows draw blood. He cannot endure that a "Philistine of culture," such as David Strauss, "an impotent fanatic," as Lichtenberg would say, shall announce a new religion and talk big concerning "our faith." Still less can he feel delighted with the German insensibility to all fair forms of speech and good behaviour. They have grown blind in the presence of those classic Greeks and Romans whom they amend remorselessly,—he has an eye upon Dindorf,—while from the French they borrow just enough to make themselves a laughing-stock in their ill-fitting attire. Must he not praise Schopenhauer all the more that such a one could lead his independent life, and restore the genuine idea of philosophy (it is not book-learning but practice founded on insight), amid a people so stupidly dilettante, so given

over to hearsay,—wretched mimics of every style because they have none of their own? With them learning has eaten out the substance of life; the Germans have no feelings except in the abstract; they are scholastics, chamber-philosophers, not cultivated but dictionaries of culture. When will they perceive that a healthy human life means forgetfulness of the too-insistent, the infinite past?—that culture is a universal method, a tone running through conduct as well as through language, and that the only test of genius, about which they write volumes, is creation? They cram their young men with histories, philosophies, criticisms, until at twenty-five the unhappy mortals exclaim, as Faust did, that they see they can know nothing; *alles ist erlebt*, selection has become impossible, and the University, which was to train them for life, turns out mercantile professors, journalists without principles, Philistines acquainted with every literature, but sceptical of all that the “everyday man” cannot grind into profit or amusement.

It is a bitter spirit that utters these home truths. Yet not altogether despairing. Nietzsche said afterwards, in his satirical way, “It will be remembered, among my friends at least, that I rushed upon this modern world with some errors and overestimates, but, in any case, as a hopeful person.” He had explained the recoil from Epicurus, which he found among the more gloomy philosophers, according to his Greek principles; it betokened a “triumphant fulness of life”; the “tragic perception” was returning, perhaps in Goethe, but surely in Wagner’s Dionysian strain, the music of the Future. That wonderful man combined in his works motion and emotion, the chorus with the heroic narrative, the legendary myth and the incentive to action which should shame the past. The years from 1870 led up to Wagner’s high noon, celebrated in tender yet incisive language by his lately-found friend on that day of days when the theatre—we had almost said the temple—at Bayreuth was founded. Listen to this exquisite praise:—

There is a musician (wrote Nietzsche in 1876) who beyond any other has the secret of finding tones peculiar to suffering and tormented souls; nay, to dumb misery itself he lends a voice. None

can equal him in the colours of a late autumn, the indescribably pathetic happiness of a last, an utterly last, and all too brief enjoyment; he knows a sound for those secret-haunted midnights of the soul when cause and effect seem to have gone asunder, and at any moment some reality may spring out of nothing. . . . He draws his resources out of the drained goblet, where the bitterest drops have met at last with the sweetest. . . . His temperament loves large walls and audacious fresco; but his spirit—he knows not this—likes best to sit in the corner of ruined houses, and there hidden, paints his masterpieces, all short, often but a single measure. . . . I admire Wagner always when he sets himself to music.

And even after Nietzsche had renounced him, listen to this :—

Apart from Wagner the magnetiser, the fresco-painter, there is still a Wagner that sets into his works little jewels, our great melancholy musician, abounding in flashes, delicacies, words of comfort in which no one had gone before him, the master of the tones belonging to a sad and comatose happiness. . . . His wealth of colours, of demi-tints, of the mysteries of vanishing light, spoils us to such a degree that almost all other musicians seem too robust after him.

Panegyric larger than that who could imagine? Yet the praise bestowed so lavishly at Bayreuth was a leave-taking; and Nietzsche turned his back at once on his musician and his philosopher when he had beclouded them with incense. Open his volume which bears the significant name of “Joyful Science,” and read there how in the years between 1876 and 1881 the disciple, passing through a long valley of desolation,—illness, solitude, and numberless griefs weighing upon a dangerously unstable temper,—was carried away into a region that Schopenhauer would have assigned to lost souls. A change, afflicting and obscure, had come over him; infinite suspicion, the unrest of a spirit walking through dry places, and a seemingly wide expanse of mind—all which, until the final catastrophe, were qualities which marked him off from his fellows—do but betray the rift within the lute. Nietzsche’s style had gained; but his thoughts became incoherent. He never afterwards wrote a connected book, or attempted in his compositions a logical order. From boyhood delighting in the sun, he would now live, so far as possible, *sub divo*, under the open sky, and by preference

in the lofty vales of the Engadine. At Sils Maria, from which many of his pages are dated, he pitched his nomad's tent during the years when, released from professorial duties, he could indulge without check the illusions that beset him. Alone and often suffering, he lost his self-control; the sense of proportion forsook him; life, unrestrained by practical obligations, grew to be a many-coloured, capricious fantasy, a thing of rapid and inconstant lights, governed, if at all, by reminiscences of the philosophy in which he had put his trust, but really as vague in course and outline as any dream. Are, then, the meditations of a mind so disordered worth pursuing? But they find readers in the Old World and the New; adherents even are not wanting; and the questions of philosophical scope and method to which they lead us are, in fact, the supreme questions of our time. Who can overlook them?

Suspicion, which in conduct may be a fault, says Nietzsche, is in philosophy a virtue, and its name—how well we know it!—is criticism. The old man of Königsberg has taught us to suspect, not one truth or another, but every truth; to cross-examine and denounce, without the least regard to sentiment or interest. Nevertheless, Kant, who proclaimed theologians bankrupt, had an interest of his own, a highly respectable one, as became so unblemished a character; it was the Moral Law, the eternal "Thou shalt" which he set up over gods and men. Schopenhauer, too, an artist if ever there was one, had a moral interest; he preached sympathy with suffering, or, as it has since been christened by an ugly Italian hybrid, "altruism"—the duty of loving, and not hurting, every creature that is liable to pain. Thus, amid the wreck of systems and religions, the absolute law of Morality stands on high; good and bad are realities, whatever becomes of "Pure Reason" and first principles in the old dogmatic kingdom, now thought by Kant and his followers to be an "idol of the theatre." But suppose, says Nietzsche, that Kant were illogical and Schopenhauer a Christian *malgré lui*? Have we better grounds for accepting as a fixed and final value the term "good" than our ancestors had when they bowed down before the term

“true”? If the whole scheme of knowledge must be transferred from the sign absolute to the sign relative (from *plus* to *minus*, we will call it), why should Morality plead exemption? All that we see, hear, feel, or judge, has fallen under the laws of perspective; the centre is this individual man, this I, this complex being of aims and appetites, mortal but wholly self-regarding, which is all that physiology leaves when it has used its sharpest instruments. What is *my* law, therefore, in the struggle from which I can escape only by falling into Chaos? Ought I not to aim at surviving? at assimilating from my neighbour who is, in fact, my enemy? at subduing whatever world there may be to my own heightened sense of existence? Let this be denominated the “Will to Power,” and we shall have made an end of the “categorical imperative,” as well as of the gospel of sympathy.

An intelligible doctrine, it must be admitted, not so much insane as immoral, and long since at home in the world. Not on this score will Nietzsche be charged with an unsound mind. For twenty years, perhaps even longer, the intuition of Life as an ascending or descending process had filled his mental vision; when illness came, it made health and all that health includes yet more desirable. Construe this passion now in the light of Darwin, and ask whether old morality, allowing neither of exception nor compromise, stern with its unchangeable decrees,—*Si fractus illabatur orbis*,—will favour the individual, who cannot look for recompense, or deem that he shall be made perfect, in a Heaven beyond the veil. There is no veil, returns Nietzsche; the only world we know is that immense chaos—for he will not so much as term it a system—of activities, instincts, processes, conflicting with one another, to which we can assign no beginning or end, no purpose, final cause, or sabbath of rest. The mind itself which pedants worship is but a device to preserve the organism; there can be no such thing as disinterested knowledge or art, let Schopenhauer rave as he will about Platonic ideals; and, by parity of reasoning, unselfish ethics would be as impossible as to the individual who practised them they must be unprofitable. Yet,—we may argue,—sympathy is a motive. “I grant you,” replies the

"immoralist" in his famous tract "Beyond Good and Evil," "sympathy does exist, and I will tell you what it means: it is the slave-morality, the system of the herd, on which modern democracy is founded."

Let us pause awhile to take breath. These tremendous invectives against all that Christians hold sacred, cannot be read without an uneasy feeling that they do, perhaps, give form and impetus to what Mr. Thomas Hardy describes as "the lines of tacit opinion," upon which many shape their lives, though comparatively few would defend them, even when the doors were shut. Morality is law, and law is a limit; how might mankind fulfil its destiny, were limits abolished? And what is its destiny? Here Nietzsche reveals the purpose which he has had in view all along. Mankind, he would say, has one supreme task,—not a moral duty, but a physiological necessity,—to produce the "overman." Does not Emerson talk of the "oversoul"? Now, the "overman" is the next high apparition of greatness, in will, mind, and body, who shall be to us what we at our best are to the ape and the tiger. He will frame his conduct upon a law by no means resembling the pact of equality, now dear to Constitution-mongers. And if we would behold him in a parable, we must read, with astonishment and pain, yet, says its author, with reverence, "Thus spake Zarathustra."

Before we turn to that extraordinary prose-poem, a word on the style adopted by its author will be requisite. Nietzsche says of himself that like his first master, Schopenhauer, he was an accident, or *lusus naturæ*, among the Germans. And truly he was. Though we should demur to his sweeping dictum, that "on our side of the Rhine, clearness is an objection and logic a disproof," no one will ascribe, even to Goethe or Lessing, a genius for epigram. The very syllables of German are heavy with an unknowable content,—perhaps the "thing in itself," which Kant was always feeling under him but could never divest of its "hulls." "The line, too, labours, and the words move slow,"—*how* slow, they shall testify who have given their days and nights to Jean Paul! German prose literature is a succession of ploughed fields after steady rain, a clay that sticks to one's boots, a boundless expanse of ideas in their primitive

and chaotic stage, where the mind welters and discrimination is beyond man's feeble power. But this, certainly not too sane, philosopher, who could not write a book, was, to repeat his well-warranted self-praise, Master of the Sentences—if only they had not been too many! As a boy, he read Sallust and felt the epigram rising to his lips; later on, with ardour and delight, he threw himself into the arms of Montaigne—the incomparable Frenchman in whom life overflows and genius rules like a spirit;—then he knocked eagerly at every door behind which sat the Pascals, the La Bruyères, the La Rochefoucaulds, elaborating their golden tapestries. He preferred the weight of Thucydides even to the grace of Plato; while in Horace the high relief of single expressions, the cameo-like perfection and delicacy of certain “Odes,” seemed to him the finest achievement to which language had attained. He was now far from the Romantic School; by conviction he had become a classic, enamoured of the French seventeenth century. “If we convalescents need an art,”—he is speaking of music, but he had in view the music of words no less than of scales and instruments,—“it is another art, an ironical, easy, fugitive, divinely untrammelled, divinely artificial art which, like a pure flame, blazes forth in an unclouded heaven.” This was that “delicate tongue for all good things” which recovery from the Romantic sickness gave him,—“a second and more dangerous innocence in pleasure,—more childlike, and a hundred times more refined, than one had ever had before.” Dionysus lends ecstasy, but Apollo rhythm; and these make the artist. Shall not appearances learn to display their beauty and hide what is hateful, since appearances are all that the mind can call its own?

The pursuit of “Truth in the abstract” being therefore given up, naught remains except “*my* truth,” the world as it lies within my horizon; let me deal with it as a landscape-painter, and, if I have the gift, unroll before me a sky transparent as glass, with pure lines of light, and snows untrodden upon the mountain ranges, above which the stars shall rise, and midnight at length keep watch for me. Books shall feed life, not quench the fire, and a godlike sleep sink all the past I do not love into

oblivion. It is the poet's dream. And Lucretius, who "denied divinely the Divine," might have dreamt it in his day, for it holds of Epicurus and the Garden. Yet, if we will give ear to Nietzsche, that Greek to whom the gods were but tranquil forms of crystal, not regarding men, was himself a decadent,—Epicurus was the "evening red" which comes at sundown, he says in a happy metaphor. Nietzsche, resolved to be free as air, supremely selfish, with an arrogance bordering on mania,—perhaps a form taken by madness,—and in his own thought equal to Napoleon or any other self-worshipper, had the choice eternally presented to all such: he must conquer the world or retire from it. But on crowds and assemblies he could make as little impression as Goethe, whose one attempt at public speaking silenced him for ever. The alternative was solitude, lonely wandering or long moods of convalescence,—a hermit-life, almost in poverty, without ties domestic, wife or children, or more than the chance disciple to whom, when his eyes failed, he might dictate sharp and bitter sayings, that came and went like flashes of lightning. He remembered how Cæsar, the famous epileptic, overcame his disease by infinite marches, bareheaded under the sun; and, dreading fresh attacks of a not unlike description, Nietzsche took staff in hand, travelled up and down Italy, was now at Sorrento and again at Venice,—he loved the Piazza of St. Mark on a bright forenoon, as favourable to his incessant musing,—went often to the Lake of Sils, "six thousand feet above the sea-level, and oh, how high above the thought of man!" he exclaims; then would be found at Nice or Santa Margherita, everywhere a ghost, sometimes hurrying as on a momentous errand to the world at large, often like the melancholy Jacques, lying prone by still waters, or fingering his tablets and hastily dashing upon them words far more vivid, so he would say, than were conceivable within closed walls.

Here are tokens of a "noble mind o'erthrown." But how suggestive that this anarchist *par excellence*, a rebel to custom and precedent, should have fled by instinct from the German ways, hating the word of command given in Prussian, the professor's pride, the babble of

newspapers, "the cloud and the drunkenness" of his folk, *gens in servitute nata*, yet only to take refuge with the ascetic ideals which Europe has, in the name of enlightenment, discarded! Once, with some intimate reference, so it would appear, to his own dark genius, he speaks of the "witch's cup" as "mingled of pleasure and cruelty,"—a philtre that no man in his senses would drink, but praised by certain moderns. Did Nietzsche, in those too frequent dreams, taste of it? The question is so far important,—if, as we think, this man will have followers,—inasmuch as the "Will to Power" manifested throughout his writings, and the sacrifice of the multitude to some few sovereign spirits, might bring with it such a relapse into hard Paganism as we have remarked symptoms of lately. Passing judgment on the Socialist State, always detestable to him, Nietzsche reprobates it as reaction and the heir of ancient despots: rightly, perchance; but could there be reaction so complete as that which for Christ would substitute 'Tiberius'? And nothing less than Imperial Rome, in its heyday of præterhuman sport, is the pattern of these fierce imaginings. We are not aware that Nietzsche had done a single unkind deed in his life; what we know of him indicates a rare sensibility to suffering; the sermons against sympathy in which he abounds betray rather the too easily moved heart than a Roman tyrant's lack of feeling. But though it were a diseased mind that prompted his allegory of the "laughing lion," a creature delighting to give pain, the doctrine may still be infectious; nor will ascetic self-denials take away the danger.

"Beyond Good and Evil" is a name to give us pause. What it means, we have been assured, is Darwin made consistent with himself, or physiology made the test of morals. Hitherto, the standard of human progress, and, as even scientific men were wont to tell us, its chief instrument, was moral good: witness the late Professor Huxley, who in his Romanes Lecture affirms that

the practice of what we call goodness or virtue involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall

not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. It repudiates the gladiatorial theory of existence.

Now, returns Nietzsche, I do not deny that this is Christian doctrine,—of course it is, and that is my quarrel with it,—but is it science? Is it evolution, whether as the “Will to Live” or the “Will to Power”? And in the democratic State, thus walled round about from natural selection, can the result be anything but a levelling down of all to mediocrity, the sacrifice of the noble to the ignoble, of strength to weakness, and of health to tending on the sick? Nature weeds out of her garden the feeble, kills the unhealthy, cherishes the vigorous. But our sympathetic treatment, which we defend as moral, turns civilisation to a lazar-house. That “artificial world within the cosmos,”—to borrow once more from Professor Huxley,—would it be possible to keep it long upon the ascending scale, if the least fit are the most likely to be “selected” by the instinct, or the command of sympathy? “Eras are to be measured by their positive power,” remarks Nietzsche in another passage; “we modern men, with our anxious self-musing and brotherly love, our virtues of labour, unpretentiousness, fair-play, and scientific spirit,—accumulating, economic, mechanical,—we represent a weak period.” The Renaissance, “so profuse and fateful,” was great because it was strong; but now there is no “pathos of distance”; in Hamlet’s phrase, “the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe.” This “delicate humanity” and “considerate morality,” this “tenderness and lateness,” do but point towards “physiological ageing.” Above all, the beggar has got into the saddle and rides. Would not Cæsar Borgia and his friends laugh themselves to death over the spectacle of the weak man unarmed who thinks all happiness comprised in peace, and dare not risk his life to advance his fortune? Borgia, it would seem, was the true evolutionist; an imitator of the cosmic process, though handling morals somewhat rudely. He had learned the value of men and events on that standard which, though not absolute, is the only one we can

employ if we would pass up to the next stage. Sympathy is surrender, and Christianity decadence. Thus concludes Nietzsche a hundred times over, in language the vehemence of which rises at last into shrieking. Decline or ascent, that is the question. Or, as Professor Clifford once cried out excitedly, "Christians have destroyed two civilisations: shall they be permitted to ruin a third?"

The situation, if grave, is piquant. We shall probably contend that between the too-aggressive self-regard of a Renaissance hero and the too-sympathetic altruism of the Socialist there is a mean of gold or iron, according to circumstances. But that men so advanced as the leaders of unbelieving science should be charged with "Christian prejudice," nay, with the most virulent type thereof, is a marvel for which few will be prepared. How little do we know ourselves, if these are prejudiced Christians! Nevertheless, in a very evident dilemma do they seem landed by Nietzsche's argument. For can they uphold an "absolute" morality, when evolution means change, and all they have to go upon is evolution? And would a "relative" morality be anything else than the expedient? Either they must turn back to the Christian principle of a world beyond time,—the so detested "good in itself," which, as Nietzsche holds, was invented by Plato and wrought the whole mischief of these "slave theories,"—or with him they must sail away, over and beyond the conception of a transcendent good or evil, into the ocean where unmoral and immoral forces strive together. But they appeal to experience,—Professor Huxley, at least, has done so,—"that fixed order of nature," says he, "which sends social disorganisation upon the track of immorality, as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses." *A la bonne heure!* Theologians would have an easy task if they could always point to this "concomitant variation" between obedience or disobedience to the moral law and social triumph. Have they not, since the day when that mighty drama the "Book of Job" was written, found herein rather a problem than a solution of their difficulties? And the great scandal of life—has it ceased to be "the good man struggling with adversity" whom no god seems to aid? The induction was, however, it will be said, from the social order, not

from individuals. But do we walk by sight or by faith when we insist on the wickedness of suicide, the immorality of all lying whatsoever, the obligation of keeping alive the hopelessly incurable, and other more sacred duties that cannot be dwelt upon here? One thing, at all events, is certain—we have not derived our sense of ethics in these matters from the struggle for existence, or the laws of evolution. It is, simply, a Christian inheritance. Let it be weakened, or its foundation sought in mere physiology, and it will soon become suspect; the “free spirits” of whom Nietzsche proclaims himself the harbinger, will undertake with him “a transvaluation of all values,” and setting up the earthly existence as a standard, without care for scientific “fictions” of an order immutable and uniform, will recommend every man to measure what is good by the advantage it brings in the using. To sacrifice oneself on behalf of the social order will then be thought as absurd as to suffer martyrdom for conscience’ sake. It is entirely a question of “might not rights,” in which he laughs that wins. To Nietzsche, the dominant note of evolution is “conquest”; and, in the long run, it is the individual that conquers for himself.

But may there not be races of conquerors? Assuredly, races of slaves were never wanting. And how can their moral ideas be the same? Nurtured on classic reminiscences, alive to the long phenomena which now unroll themselves before us in Egyptian monuments and Assyrian records,—to the “mystic sublimity” of castes, flowing in their separate channels through the tracts of Indian time,—this enthusiast for systems discredited in our day would bring back an aristocracy of blood to withstand universal suffrage. True, he holds a patent for genius, whencesoever sprung; but genius will make its own way, provided that the swinish multitude do not trample it down. The “herd” is the danger. “Equal before God,” the old Christian watchword, has now become “equal before the mob.” They, shrinking and cowering in their misery while the conqueror smote or plundered them, first found out the word “pity”; they made it a god and expanded it into a religion. The prophets of Israel, for example,—have not they lifted up their voices against pride, power, luxury,

art, and war, "calumniating all these things as 'the world,' and calling them evil"? That servile tribe, the Jews, with their millenniums of peace and the lion lying down with the lamb, it was they, surely, that taught men to look on pain, inflicted or endured, as the chief curse of humanity. Their moral law may be summed up in the one commandment, "Be kind." The high races of the world painted on their escutcheon a very unlike commandment, "Be noble." And yet, says Nietzsche in a curiously sublime, half-mad outburst, it was by taking the revenge of charity, by forgiving and loving, that this horde of slaves overcame, and Judæa led Rome in triumph. The Cross and the Redeemer,—*in hoc signo*, he concludes, it is matter of history that "the underworld of suffering" mounted above Pagan civilisation and vanquished Apollo.

These are not new conceptions, though flung out with a passion of hatred which, even among anti-Christians, is almost without parallel. Nietzsche gives in abstract form,—he was hardly capable of breathing into the hollow phantom the breath of life,—but, on the whole, he gives precisely the same view of religion which Heine has tricked out in the pantheistic splendours of his book "Ueber Deutschland." It is the revolt of flesh against spirit, impulse an argument to deny free-will, good and bad confounded in one, like the red and violet of the solar spectrum,—the extremes are but a resolution of light which is in fact the same. Spirit is a negation, according to both these evangelists, of "sense and seeming,"—the immortal soul, the world to come, a transcendent Deity, sin, judgment, and conscience, are terms in a fanciful doctrine like alchemy or star-gazing. Men have long been ill of this disease; high time it is that they should recover. The words "decadence" and "evolution" had not been invented when Heine wrote. Beyond question, had he known them, he would have identified the whole Christian era with decadence, and given glory and honour to the modern revolt from its dogma as the next stage in evolution. Nor does it signify much whether, in ascribing to Israel the religion of pity as to its fountain-head, Nietzsche has overlooked Gautama and his disciples; since no one will seriously contend that Buddhism exercised a direct, or

even a recognisable influence, on the revolutions of the first Christian century.

How shall we bring these shafts of light to a focus? Might we not say, in the spirit of a profound suggestion hazarded by Kant, that man, so long as the visible world delights and intoxicates him, will never dream of the invisible? and that the "sorrows of death" alone will drive him to consider the "great Perhaps,"—the note of interrogation which points beyond things seen to things in the dark? When this clue has been laid hold on, the reflective will seek in pain, not in enjoyment, the key to life's mystery, which, if present happiness cannot resolve it, present trouble need not increase but rather lighten. Hereupon, a second world is dimly felt,—suspected, let us say, beyond the "seeming,"—and, though the terms in which we express our forebodings must be negative, that which they grope after is the strongest of all affirmations;—it is the Everlasting Yea; while the flesh with its instincts, furies, and excesses, will be henceforth merely a shadow of it.

If this be denied, we are thrown back upon the visible "cosmic process" and the philosophy of fact. Positivism—to call it by its unlovely name—has conquered. Nietzsche lauds and magnifies Auguste Comte as a constructive mind the like of which neither Germany nor England can show among men of science. With Comte he accepts "phenomena" as the sum-total of our knowledge, adding, in a spirit which would have delighted Hume, that, of course, phenomena themselves are but phenomenally conceived by us; that we must not prate of the "ego" any more than the "substance," or of will as a faculty, or of "soul" as aught save a group of sensations. Reality is action and reaction; moreover, by infinite training from times prehistoric, the human animal has come to interpret his world upon a highly complex, artificial scheme, made up—like language, for instance—of the most varied materials, and moulding experience in a thousand ways capriciously. Knowledge is an art, not a science; the famous metaphysicians have left us their autobiographies in the shape of systems, and cunningly passed them off as though disinterested and

impersonal; but they are lyric poems, and whoso should take them for transcripts of reality would not be wise.

Nietzsche resolved to bestow upon the world his own lyric poem. It is "Zarathustra," to which we have come at length over these mountain-paths. On a day, as he went wandering through the woods about the Lake of Silvaplana, in the Engadine,—he marks it as in August, 1881,—and in the neighbourhood of an immense pyramidal boulder not far from Surlei, "the first flash" of its sovereign idea, "Eternal Recurrence," darted into his mind. Ever after, the thought returned with growing brilliancy. When he wrote "Joyful Science," a hundred tokens were laid up in it of "the approach of something incomparable"; that volume glittered at its close "with the diamond-set beauty of the first words of Zarathustra," and "in the delightful silent bay" of Rapallo, two years subsequently, the opening chapters were conceived. An "almost intolerable expansion of feeling" accompanied these mighty inspirations. At Rome, Nice, or Mentone, various parts found their fitting language, But the work, though running to nearly five hundred pages, remains a fragment. Ere it was published in its present form Nietzsche's mind gave way, never to be restored by such care and kindness as at other times had brought him round. His last compositions belong to the winter of 1888; early in the next year mental disease overtook him once more. He was confined in an asylum; and by-and-by transferred to Naumburg, where he died on August 25th, 1900.

Such is the sad but necessary prologue to a criticism of the work which may on good grounds be termed the Bible of Positivism. Sooner or later, the philosophy that passes by as inconceivable every "other-world," metaphysical, religious, or scientific, except the world of sense, was destined to find its poet. Signs were not lacking, also, that whoever should strike these fresh chords would prefer some prose-rhythm to the verse-making which has grown to be a toy or an amusement with the world at large. Poetry, giving itself out as such, is the private joy of a comparatively small circle; the modern poets, it has been said, sing to one another,

and men do not stay to hear these nightingales. On the other hand, preachers with a mission,—let us name, though not appraising them, Walt Whitman, Felix Dahn, and Edward Carpenter,—do find an audience, perchance not fit, certainly not few, to whom their rhapsodies bring conviction and a sense of the new birth. It is worth while remarking that all these builders of the lofty rhyme are anarchists, Ego-worshippers, rebels to law and order, intent on realising ideals which dethrone duty and deify passion. But if others, like Karl Gutzkow and Wilhelm Jordan, have traced a pathway along which the author of “Zarathustra” walks obediently, yet he, most of all among Germans, possessed that “immense rhetorical power and rhapsodic gift,”—as Professor Tille describes it in the preface to his finely wrought translation,—which can take up esoteric or obscure ideas and cast them into life and literature.

These four books are the antithesis to Dante’s “Divine Comedy”: they paint, with rapid and often contradictory strokes, the “Human Comedy”; but not as in Balzac, crowded with figures, rich in chances and fatalities, a market-place seen through Dutch-artist eyes, and infinite in miniature. Nietzsche had neither plastic imagination nor the sense of contrast which inspires and diversifies the best narrative. He could not throw himself into minds of a pattern opposed to his own; we look in vain for that holding of the balance even whereby the genius of Walter Scott is so admirably shown. One story, and only one, could Nietzsche tell: his travels, griefs, experiences, hopes; and how enemies had met him in the way. His rhapsody is a monologue, an endless confession with a single hero, in whose light all the rest are thin-voiced shadows; they have no blood in them. But we are forgetting the story itself. Let us endeavour to sketch some of its main features.

The name, Zarathustra, is, of course, Persian; but, except in the curious article of Eternal Recurrence, the opinions held by *this* Zoroaster have nothing in common with his very ancient namesake. He is, rather, the Mohammed of Darwinism, looking forward to the possible next or higher Man; if we think of him as a pilgrim from

this world—modern Europe and all it believes in—to the world to come, we must bear in mind that such a world will come on earth, and not in heaven; it is the golden age of the secular philosophy, which begins with the death of old ideals. Nietzsche puts into his prophet's mouth a cruder language; we will spare ourselves the pain of quoting it. Enough that the religious period is to pass away, and a new generation arise that knows not Deity. For the journey from our decaying century a guide is needed, and Zarathustra is the man. He has read the Old Testament with envy and despair of its inimitable power, its large music, its persuasiveness; and, so far as modern speech can reproduce aught of its stern majesty, the wanderer will attempt it. In a continuous parable, with imagery woven throughout, the talk runs on, three or four times rising to heights of emotion which are called the songs of Zarathustra; but except in the "Drunken Song," where he breaks off not to resume his teaching again, there is no rhyming. Philosophy and fiction, the serious and the comic, satire, prophecy, criticism, love, friendship, hatred, and laughter, with an overweening sense of the part that he is playing, make the substance of the teacher's discourse. He often contradicts himself, as we have hinted: to reconcile necessary evolution with the "free spirit," perfection with utilitarian methods, and a superfluity of power with the struggle for existence, is more than Nietzsche could accomplish, though not more than he was willing to undertake. The currents of thought which he was painting with so random a brush have run into whirlpools, and we can sometimes learn of them only by the clouds of foam that they cast up.

When Zarathustra was thirty years old,—thus the tale begins,—he left his home, and the lake of his home, and went into the mountains. There he rejoiced in his spirit and in his solitude, and for ten years grew not weary. At length his heart turned within him; one morning he rose up with the dawn, stepped into the presence of the Sun, and thus spake unto him:—

Thou great star, what would be thy happiness, were there not those for whom thou shinest? . . . Lo, I am weary of my wisdom, like the bee that hath hived too much honey; I need hands reaching

out for it. I would fain grant and give until the wise among men once more enjoy their folly, and the poor their riches.

Thus Zarathustra's going down began—in a spirit, not of compassion, but of over-abundance; with paradoxes in plenty, and his gospel which he cried aloud in the market-place, "Behold, I teach you beyond-man." The idle people, collected to see a rope-dancer on the high rope, mocked and jeered; when their new prophet described to them the "last man," who "makes everything small," invents "happiness," works for entertainment, is equal to his neighbour, is clever and has read everything, and is neither rich nor poor, the folk interrupt, "Give us that last man, Zarathustra." They cannot understand the saying, "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what may be loved in man is that he is a transition and a destruction." The "folk and the herd" will agree with "the good and just" in hating one who tells them to despise virtue; in whatever sense he meant it, to them he has become a criminal, a law-breaker. And so Zarathustra, when his first preaching is done, looks for companions only and leaves the crowd. He will never, in truth, find them. We hear of his disciples, but do not so much as know their names. By an unexplained miracle there wait upon him certain fabulous creatures, an eagle and a serpent. And he can always find an audience, which, however, mostly remains silent when he speaks. What, indeed, could they say? For argument is not vouchsafed them, but only assertion—bold, picturesque, infallible in its own conceit, ever stirring them up to free themselves from bondage. The bondage meant is contract, law, marriage, honesty, life itself when it has ceased to bring delight or its loss may quicken the march of the new period. No wonder that many listen and some are persuaded by so large a doctrine. We cannot forbear applying to it Nietzsche's own words, "Atheism, when it takes hold of a man, gives him a sort of innocence,"—the anarchist feeling is intoxication.

How shall we venture to touch upon matters so deep and dangerous as are indicated by chapters written against "the Preachers of Death" and the "Despisers of the

Body," against scholars, poets, and fortune-tellers; in favour of "Free Death," and, in a thousand unexpected ways, against the supernatural? We should prefer to praise such a clear and tender song as Zarathustra sings to "his dead," a reminiscence of Ossian, perfect in feeling and measure: "Yonder is the isle of graves, the silent; yonder also are the graves of my youth. Thither will I carry an ever-green wreath of life." These musical lines of prose carry with them a scent of woods, the keenness of mountain winds, and a sense of broad and placid sunshine. They are poetry of the Alps, improvised under an open sky. "For this is the truth," said Nietzsche,—“I have departed from the house of scholars, and the door I have shut violently behind me.” In his travels to the "country of culture" he saw his former fellow-countrymen "with fifty mirrors about them, which flattered their play of colours"; they were written all over with signs of the past and painted with new signs; and he that should take away their veils and garments and colours and gestures would just keep sufficient to scare the birds. Too true, and the explanation of his own state! With the raving of all times, with dreams and gossip, Nietzsche had been driven wild into the solitary woods; the intense confusion bred this nightmare, which has still its beautiful landscapes, far horizons, lights in a clouded heaven, and, amid parodies and paradox, seeds of truth which a less distracted age may foster.

The poem, as we have said, does not end; it breaks off. There is in it a certain wavering progress; we catch now and again the sound of some great conflict in the words; when the sea sleeps, and Zarathustra stands alone among the cliffs, he whispers to himself, "Love is the danger of the loneliest one, love unto everything, if it only live." He is a "kindhearted fool." His rage and scorn and praise of cruelty are, perhaps, but the symptoms of a deeply wounded affection. The soul, too, must sing, or even dance, in that "song of great longing," which, at another time, Nietzsche would surely have condemned as Wagnerian tenderness and overmuch sympathy with sadness. In the last fragment, it is a cry of distress that sends him out on pilgrimage until he find who has uttered

it; and when the flying or creeping shadows of the past come to him,—the kings, and the wizard, and the conscientious man of small science, and the ugliest man, and other hideous or forlorn creatures,—he receives them all into his cave, tending them, although with a speech that mocks them somewhat, until they seem to grow into the likeness of that Ideal One whom he has guessed at in his dreams. Thus he builds, perchance, better than he knew; and we will not discuss the tables of fresh values that he has put forth.

Our task is easier. It was fully time that the question should be asked of evolution, whither, according to the men of science, is it moving, and what is the law of its ascent? Is the Christian creed essential to it, or can we so read the writing in man's flesh and spirit as to conclude that "seeming" is the only world, adaptation to it the supreme wisdom? Nietzsche, resolute enough to deal with his life as an experiment, lonely enough to have cut through the bonds of social convention, and—it must be said—large-souled enough to despise the neutral tints and makeshift compromises of a world bent on enjoying its music-hall pleasures, has found the rhetoric which, with heat and insistence, demands a reply to these questions. Had he put them as a Christian, the men of scientific unbelief would, doubtless, not deem them worth answering. But he is the least orthodox writer of the age. And he has paid with his intellect for his heterodoxy. Therefore, an answer cannot be refused to that searching interrogation, "Is evolution merely the working out of a physiological problem, or is it something in the end quite different?" Will the "children's land" be, as Zarathustra said, a world in which "there are gods but no god"; or will it be "the kingdom of final causes," with Reason and the Divine Law above it? Science, culture, freedom, democracy, hang upon this word. The ideals of anarchy—are they the conclusions of a self-justified Darwinism? Or, contrariwise, does the individual count only as a means to an end, a wheel in the machinery which keeps the State going; and must we all worship this "new idol" as omnipotent? Are education so-called, and mediocrity, and journalism to pull down the mighty works of old,

until healthy barbarians sweep the decadent away? Shall we hold that phenomena are the sum of reality, and take as a principle that "Nothing is true; everything is lawful"? To have stated a question accurately, the wise will tell us, is half-way to the answer. And in his head-long, iridescent style, the madman and genius, Friedrich Nietzsche, has stated the question of science.

CONCLUSION.¹

“THERE is a principle,—a self-evident truth,” said Father Arrowsmith in his dispassionate tones, “which our holy Father, St. Ignatius, calls the ‘Foundation,’ and upon which the whole of religion is built. It cannot be denied when it has been looked at with the mind’s eye; but it may be forgotten or evaded. Woe, however, to him that will not see it as it is! Without this principle a man lives at random; at the mercy of everything that happens; he was right yesterday, he is wrong to-day; and he has neither compass nor steering-gear by which to be guided.

“This great first truth, on which all else depends, is that man exists for a certain, definite, unmistakable purpose; that he has an end or meaning, and consequently a task to fulfil. What is that end? The Saint replies, ‘Man was made that he may praise God, do Him reverent service, and thereby save his own self. All other things—sickness, health, poverty, riches, good report and evil report, life and death—are ordained to help him to that end. Wherefore he should keep himself in a state of perfect indifference towards them, choosing only that which is conducive to the Divine purpose.’ In brief, ‘Abstine, sustine’—the Stoic rule—is the rule of reason, if we know ourselves to be in an ordered world, of which God is the explanation. . . .

Taking up his parable, he began the famous meditation of the “Two Standards,” which he set before them as a painter would dash in the main outlines of his picture. They must, he said, imagine it in the enthusiastic way of the Spanish saint,—a Biscayan, full of crusading fervour,—to whom life presented itself as a Holy War. Did they want inspiration to urge them

¹ From “The Two Standards,” ch. xxiv., “Fuge, Tace, Quiesce.”

on the noblest course? Let them contemplate the struggle and contrast the leaders. . . .

Heroism never died out; nay, there was an enthusiasm of darkness as well as of light. The modern man, sometimes a recluse in his ivory tower, dedicated to literature, art, metaphysics, or self-indulgence, was often effeminate, but always given up to impulse. He went adrift. He was the creature of currents, yet acknowledged no superior in earth or heaven. None!—and still Samson was overthrown by a look, a sound, a shadow of pleasure. He was simply a Son of Chaos. And he served the Prince of the power of the air—a cruel captain, full of treacheries. In this meditation they would fix their thoughts on the fire that is never quenched, the black fumes of disgust and suicide, the bonds that entangle the soul, Modern books reeked with a sadness too dreadful to be quite human. Behind their frivolous or desperate language the Terrible Shadow lurked. . . .

But from the deeps of death, the tired voice suddenly went up, rejoicing and tender, to that sacred spot, nigh unto Jerusalem, where a holier Captain stood, "*speciosus et amabilis*," inviting them to His service of Love. "There is but one passion," cried Father Arrow-smith, "which cannot go astray, cannot be too great,—the passion for righteousness embodied in Jesus. Philosophy and love are here the same thing. No vague ideals are these, dressed up in fine words, drawing on to-morrow because they have had no yesterday, but ascertained and ascertainable experience. Life is an art too complex for any rule but one, and that is the Imitation of Christ."

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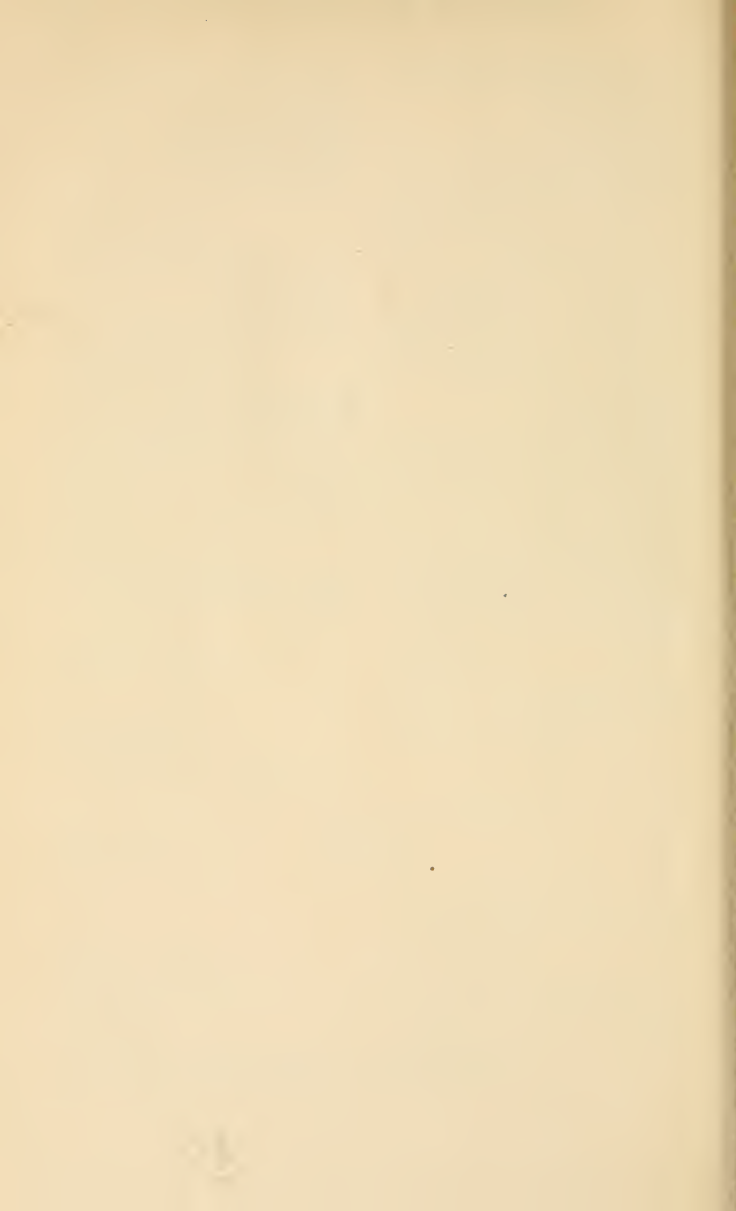
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